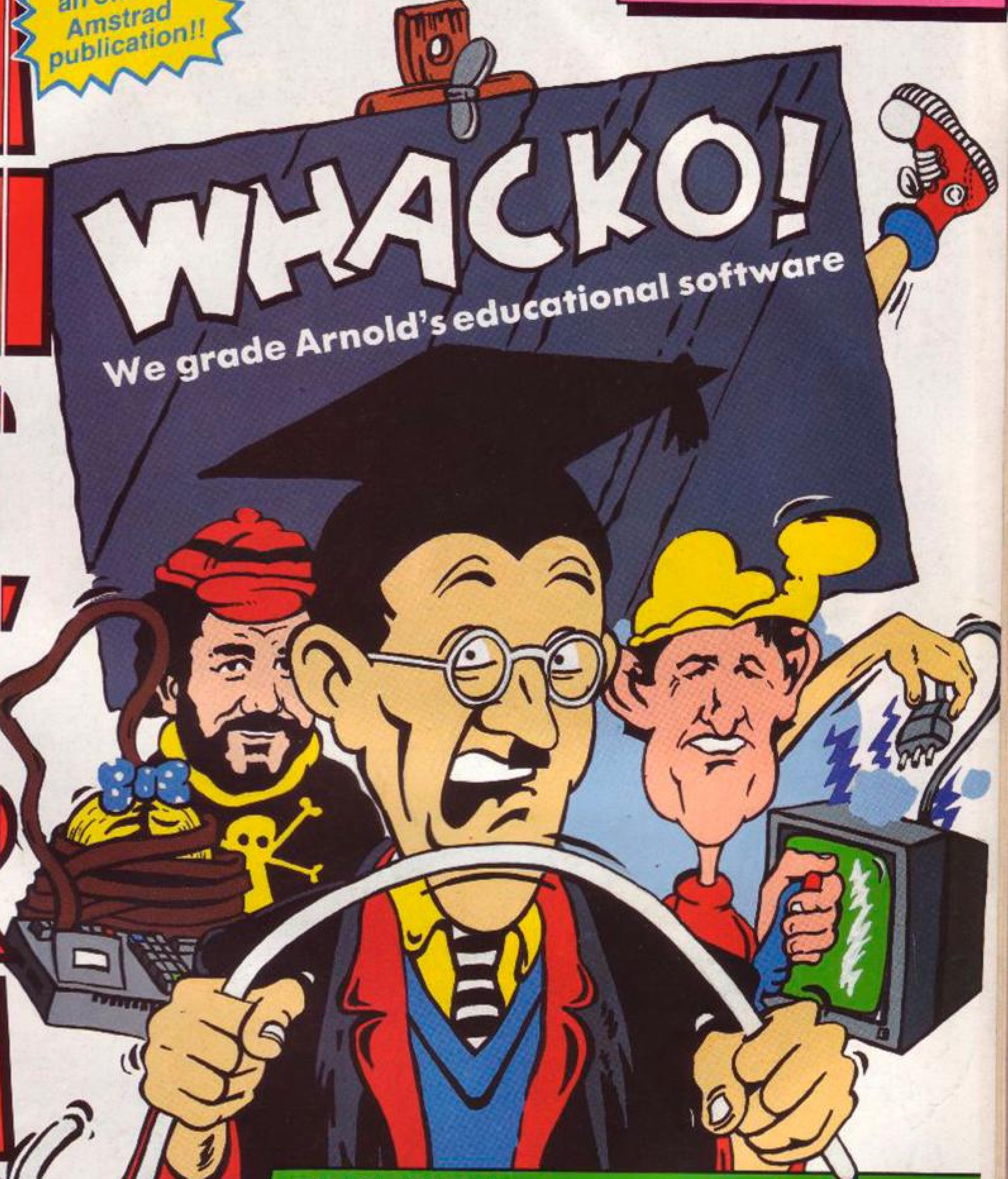
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No.7 APRIL 1986 £1

NOT an official Amstrad publication!!

AMSTRAD ACTION

THE MOULD BREAKING MEGAZINE FROM FUTURE PUBLISHING



RASPUTIN

The Mastergame is an *incredibly* addictive, *amazingly* difficult arcade adventure

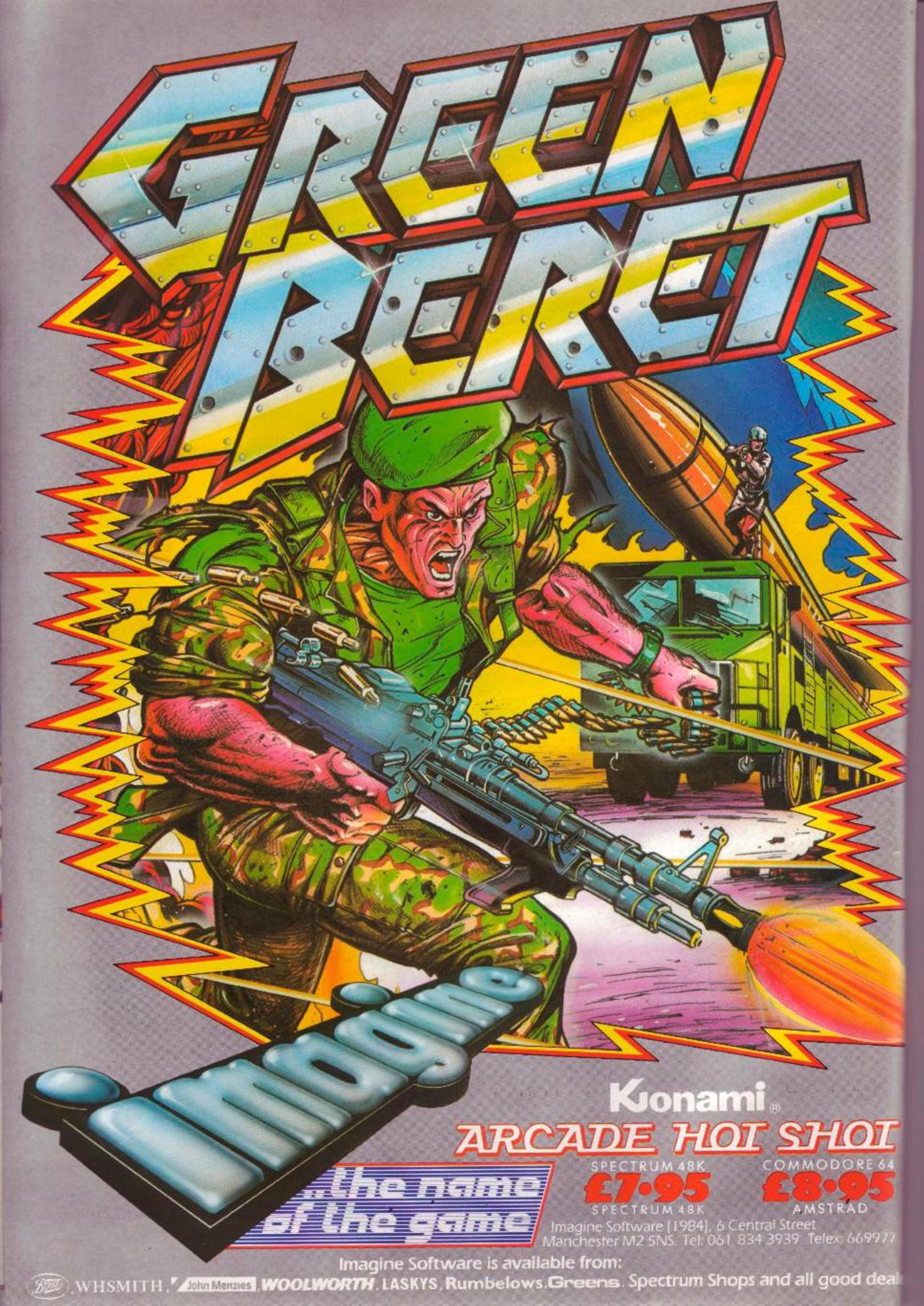
GLORIOUS GRAPHICS

AMX *Art* – in colour – *Melbourne Draw* and *Grafpad* reviewed.

MASTERTRONIC

Profile of the budget masters – plus previews

Plus – *New Word* reviewed. *Codebreaker* – this month's type-in will excercise the grey matter. *Hot Stuff* – stunning special offers. *Previews* – pictures and reports on *Knight Games, Eidalon, Meltdown.* Also starring competitions, high scores, your letters and stacks more good stuff.


GREEN BERET
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..the name of the game
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THE LINE-UP

AMSTRAD ACTION APRIL 1986

HOT REVIEWS



APRIL SPECIALS





JUICY OFFERS



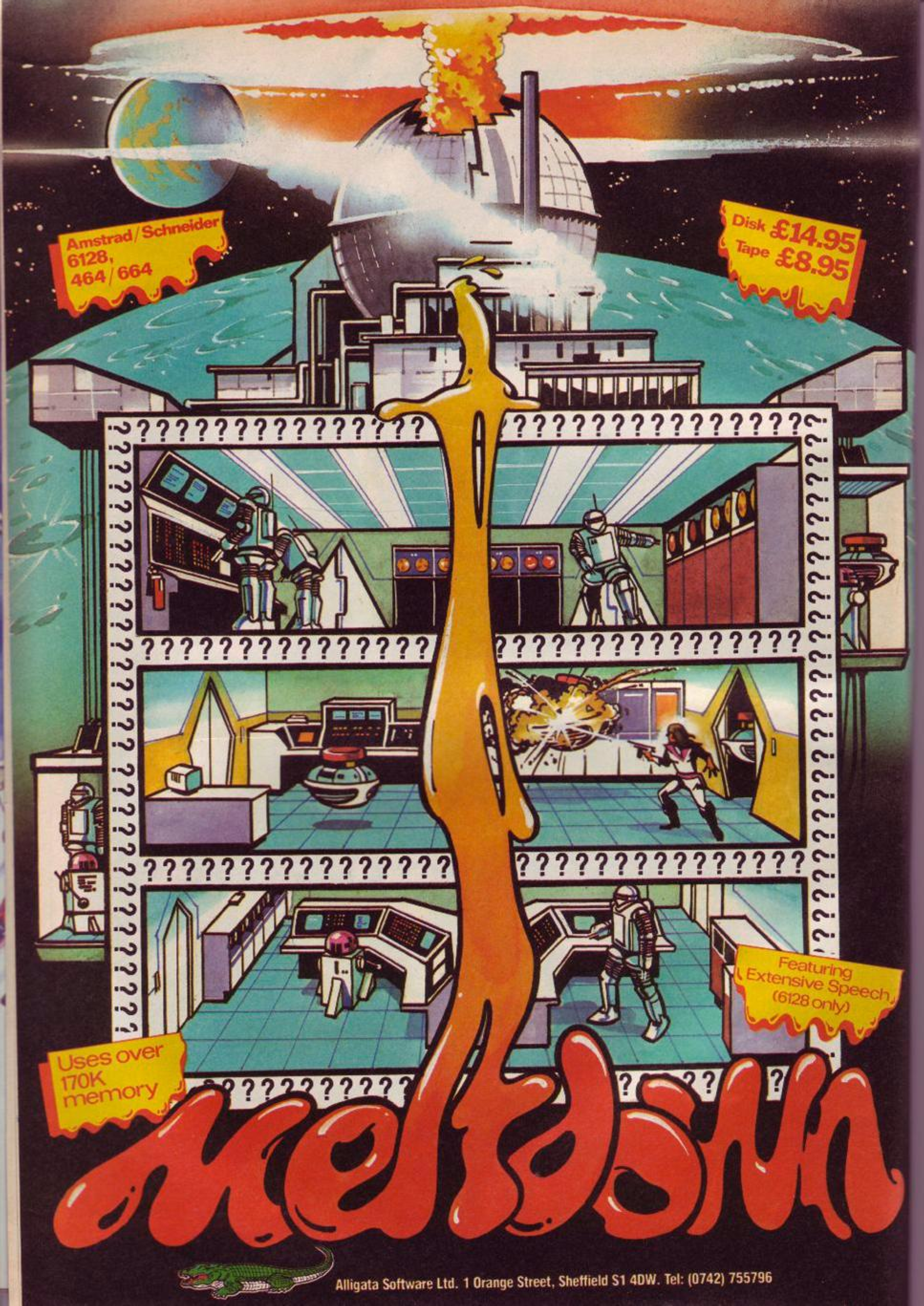
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Dear Readers,

Hello, good evening/morning/afternoon and welcome to the fattest issue yet of *Amstrad Action* – 124 pages of rollicking good fun. And information, of course.

This month sees Serious Software acquiring still more space, and getting its first pages in magnificent AmstradActionColor. I think you'll find the art produced with the AMX software pretty impressive.

We've also got that survey of educational software many of you have asked for and that we've been promising for so long. The results are a little disappointing, to say the least.

The Mastergame is one of the most addictive, and difficult, programs we've seen in along time. Even the legendary Bob Wade, who's probably played more Amstrad games than anyone in the world, found it toughissimo. It's well worth the effort, though.

Next month we've got a real bumper bonus issue coming – we're going to GIVE you something you'd have to be crazier than a Somerset cider-head to refuse. See the last page for the staggering details. Order your issue NOW.

Don't get caught in the May rush for a copy.

Peter Connor

Amstrad Action
The Old Barn
Somerton
Somerset TA11 7PS
☎ 0458-74011

(This is the address for all editorial matters and for subscriptions, but not for advertising)

Elite bug

If you've got a copy of the long-awaited game you've probably noticed by now – or at least heard about – a very nasty bug that causes the game to crash.

Even if you got hold of the game from our special offer, please don't send it back to us, but to Firebird. They've taken out an advert in this issue telling you how to go about it.

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TECHNICAL EDITOR
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Trevor Gilham

ASSISTANT ART EDITORS
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Jane Toft

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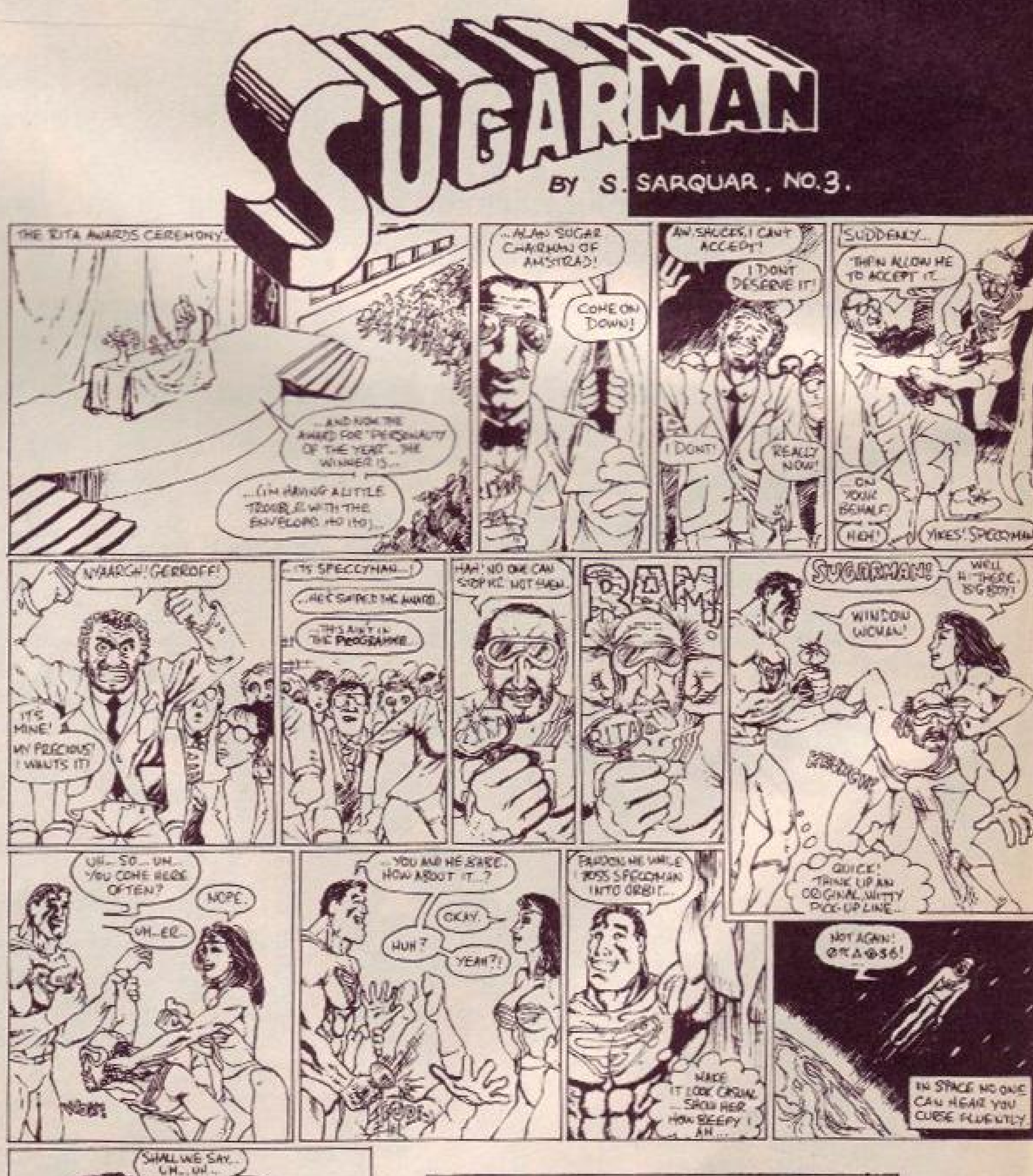
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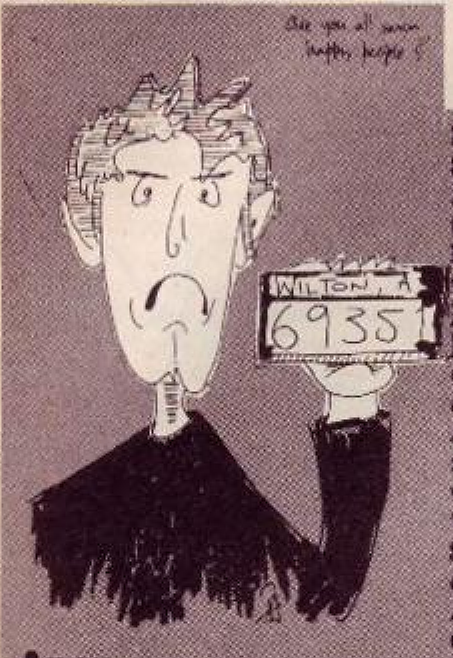
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ED LiNes



MARCH: Sinclair produce the Spectrum 256K.
APRIL: Legend start advertising their latest 'offering'.
MAY: Pete Connor has a nervous breakdown.
JUNE: Andrew Wilton smiles.
JULY: Mastertronic *pay* their customers to *take* their games away.
AUGUST: AA move to the 'decrepit dump that no-one else wants'. Pete Connor says it's 'nice'.
SEPT: Legend announce their origninal mega-game – *Space Invaders*.
OCT: *Sunday Times* votes Legendthe greatest software house ever.
NOV: Ultimate do the inevitable.
DEC: Christmas. Nothing happens, much.

Anon

The anonymous sender of this cruel picture also gave us an *Amstrad Action* calendar for 1986. Here are his predictions:

Competition Winners

Here's your chance to see if you're one of the lucky readers who've won a prize in either the Gremlin or Strangeloop competitions, which appeared in the February issue. We received stacks of entries for both of the competitions, but from all of these we eventually managed to come up with the winners, who will each receive a magnificent prize.

Gremlin

Gareth Powers, Clapton; Mr T Doggett, Sevenoaks; Peter Rabbage, S. Devon; Phil Doherty, Luton; Paul Robson, Cleveland; Colin Reeves, Southampton; D A Thomas, Fareham; Keith Theobald, Ipswich; Lawrence Smith, Gwent; David Hackett, Dyfed; Murray Urquhart, Inverness; K F Man, Hornchurch; Chad Griffin, Birmingham; P Nicholls, Hoddesdon, Herts; Ashley M Babey, Eastleigh, Hants; Neil Webster, Sheffield; D Abrahams, Ickenham, Middlesex;
Mr J E King, N. Devon; Richard Burton, Cornwall; Johnathan Edwards, Beckenham, Kent; William Cornes, 8 Stoberry Crescent, Wells, Somerset;
Richard Clarke, Stafford; Christopher Robinson, London SE28; D Lambert, Gosport, Hants; Anon, Reading.

Strangeloop

Paul Jolleys, Wigan; Che Wall, Maidstone; M J Cheney, Bournemouth; Dave Rhodes, Weston-Super-Mare; D M McMorrine, Manchester; N J Purser, Harrogate; D J Wilson, Stoke-on-Trent; N White, Plymouth; Robert Haydon Green, Staffs; Amyas Stephens, Farnham; Ian Turner, Thornhill; Michael Welsh, Yorkshire; Christopher Winstanley, Preston; Andrew Duff, Ross-shire; P Richardson, Ayrshire; Simon Solway, Sheffield; Steven Allan, Edinburgh; J e Hyde, Colchester; Tat Wah Liu, Lincoln; D Roofe, Wisbech, Cambs; Mr P G Worrall, Ayr; P Gibbons, Portland, Dorset; Andrew Gibson, Grays, Essex; S Barber, Bishop's Stortford; Mark Thomas, Mid-Glamorgan; Ben Taylor, Glossop, Derbyshire; D G Scott, Norfolk; Anon, Devizes; Mr J Parkin, New Ollerton, Notts; Mrs Pauline Hinton, Reading; Nicholas Stokes, Harrogate; Matthew Lavine, Pontefract; Mr A Waters, Leeds; Gregory Nicholas, Hardwicks, Gloucester; Paul Simpson, Harrogate; Guy Hart, Kent; Nick Chaplin, Maidenhead; Mr I Mathie, Dunstable; R Brindley, Fife; Neil McClymont, Taplow, Bucks; Mr S A Collyer, Rugby; J R Morton, Cumbernauld, Scotland; Carl Moon, Chesham, Bucks; Jason Stone, Wirral; William Freeland, Dalkeith, Mid-Lothian; Johnathan Stevens, London; Nigel Cox, Hereford; Peter Straker, Bucks; Tony Brown, Newport; Mr P Williams, Cambridge.



The Two Janes

Introducing, on my right, Jane Toft, 25, latest addition to the AA Art Team. She's a recent graduate of North Staffs Polytechnic and is something of a whizz with a Rotring.

On my left, in the publisher's office, we have Jane Farmer, 17– a native Somertonian! She'll be handling telephone enquiries on subscriptions etc. and generally making herself useful.



Impossible Mission & Dambusters

The saga continues. *Impossible Mission* was due to be released in the middle of February, but yet another programming hitch has caused a further delay. Our latest information is that it should now be available by the end of March. *Dambusters* should also be ready about the same time.

If you're really fed up with waiting for either of the two games, you can change to a game we definitely *have* got. Just drop us a line and tell us what you want to change to. You can take any of the games from the current subscription offer, except *Elite*, or any of the other US Gold games we were offering – *Bruce Lee, Beach-Head, Bounty Bob Strikes Back, Raid.*

Once again we offer our apologies for any heartache and disappointment these delays may have caused.

'Ello, 'ello, 'ello

What's all this then? The local constabulary have at last been taking an interest in Amstrad Action. Not, I hasten to add, because we're guilty of any nefarious crimes, or even any petty ones.

No, it seems that a certain member of 'The Force' in the metropolis of Exeter ordered a game from the world-famous AA Mail Order service. It didn't arrive, because we couldn't get it from our suppliers. Policeman grows suspicious – well, it's an occupational hazard. Suspicions grow on seeing that the Mail Order service operates from a private address.

A *Bogus Computer Games Company Red Alert* goes out from Exeter to Somerton. Squad car arrives to check out Sue Taylor. But if she's not genuine, who is? Yes, folks, this is Amstrad Action – the mag that keeps the crime figures down!





Another month, another sack of letters. One reader writes to tell us what a load of rubbish we are. I think it's a joke, but in case it's not the author *doesn't* get a tape.

One person who *does* win a tape is Jonathan Scott, who spotted a gross error in our *Cauldron* comp a couple of issues back. We really mangled the bard, and Jonathan mangles us. But observe how we cunningly shift the blame to to other shoulders.

So, you see, a close reading of AA could reap it's rewards. Write in about anything that takes your fancy in the world of Amstrad computing. Send letters to: *ReAction, Amstrad Action, The Old Barn, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS.*

Rubbish!

Your magazine is rotten, juvenile rubbish!!! It has sickening colourless articles of inferior quality and is not in the least bit funny!! It has very few articles on the Dutch fishing industry or the socio-economic problems of South-East Asia!!...And as for Toot...£&%*(!+

Added to this, you charge the unbelievable price of £1 per copy for this filth!!!!

Yours not-quite-so-sincerely
Daragh Ward
Dublin

I couldn't agree more. As from the next issue all this trivial computer nonsense is out, to be replaced by genuinely entertaining articles on macro-economics, the merits and demerits of proportional representation, Samantha Fox etc.



Where are the games?

I begin this letter with the usual 'I think your mag is great' job. I could go on, mentioning how good your AA rating system is and how I love your Second Opinion method, but that's not what I wrote for.

The main reason really was to moan – sorry – about the cheap discount pages there are in your and many other magazines. I find it damned irritating looking down the lists to find that well over half the games advertised in them haven't been released yet and many won't see the shelves for months.

As an example, flicking through a magazine *last August* I was thrilled to find *Shadowfire* advertised for the Amstrad. I know I shouldn't have, but I ventured down into London to buy it. When I arrived I found, to my dismay, that the newest game they had was *Super Pipeline II* (no offence to Taskset). *Shadowfire* probably won't be released until this August, let alone last, if ever.

T. Fenton
London NW11

I sympathise with you – Shadowfire is a game we offered last Autumn, in the firm belief that that was when it would be released. As you know, it hasn't materialised. The moral is to take stockists' lists with a large pinch of salt.

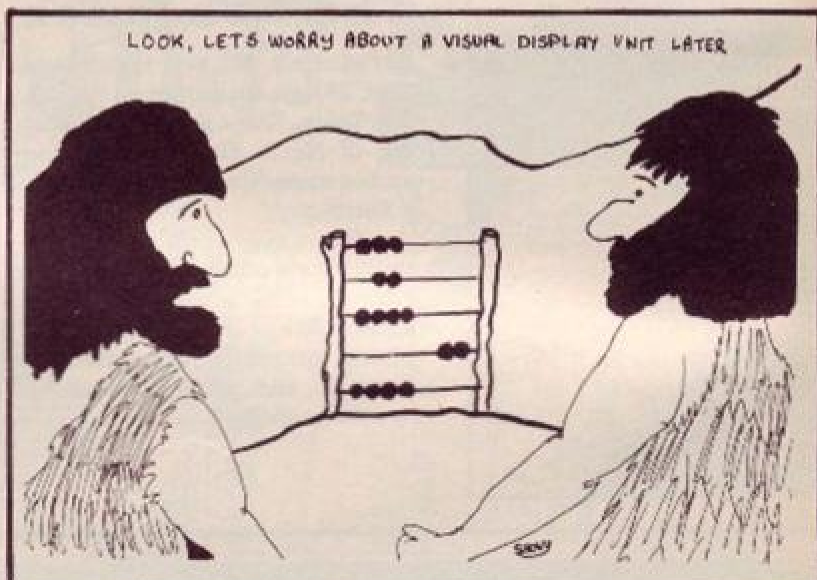
The discount houses advertise games which the software houses tell them are soon to be available. And software houses make a habit of being over-optimistic. All you can do, I think, is to wait till a game's actually been reviewed, or the news pages of a mag tell you it's definitely out, before you send off for it.

Chimera blues

I have received Issue 6 of your groovy, fab etc. magazine. Having read your review on *Chimera* I, of course, bought it. I have a CPC464 with green screen monitor. The only problem is when you form the first warhead. It says 'take this warhead to a blue room'. Well, I can't tell the difference between green and blue. I do hope you can help as I am totally stumped and unable to map it. So please, please help me.

David Flett
Aberdeen

I hope the map in Issue 6 sorted out the problem, David. The blue rooms are...blue.



Breakdown saga

To add fuel to the letter you printed in your March edition, from R. Chillingworth of Watford, I too have had problems with Amstrad computers. The story is as follows.

After initially purchasing a 464 some time ago I was disturbed to find that pressing any of the cassette keys tended to short out the power supply. However, this was simply a case of bad assembly and the fault was soon rectified.

After a few more days the machine developed the habit of losing its memory, and thus was duly changed by the suppliers. The new replacement had an almost unusable cassette mechanism, so I soon gave up with that. As by this time I had a fair collection of software, my machine of necessity had to be another Amstrad. As the 664 was then out and there were rumours of a 6128 I rang Amstrad, who stated with great authority that under no circumstances was the 6128 to be sold in this country. This, I might add, was about a week before the launch of the same.

Following this conversation I then bought a 664. Unfortunately, the printer port refused to work on this example. This was then changed for another with an erra-

tic disc drive, followed yet again by one which actually worked. After a few months the keyboard failed, and after a wait of two months for it to be repaired, followed by one hour's use, the disc drive has died...I have now given up, as I know when I am beat.

Let us not forget that Amstrad are not 'in computers', but are a mass merchandising organisation with no facilities or desire to repair work ooutside the guarantee period. I am informed that any spares required would be a long time coming and rather expensive. So come on Mr. Sugar – even Sir Clive does better than this.

I may also add that several of my friends have had varying amounts of trouble, and I feel that Amstrad's reliability survey must have been done a week after the computer was launched. So let's just wait a while, eh?

M.K. Gill
Brighouse

According to their latest sales figures, Amstrad are now very much 'in computers'. In fact, computers now seem to account for something like 80% of their turnover. So your tale of woe is the sort of thing that they ought to be concerned about. To be fair to Amstrad, we've had very little trouble with our machines here in the office and letters such as yours are still pretty rare. But if we get many more I'll start to get worried – and Amstrad should too.

Textual critcism

I have a small query about ye olde *Cauldron* competition in the Christmas issue of AA. When you gave the results of the comp in the March issue, you said it was a hedge-pig that whined three times during the witches' chant (in *Macbeth*).

However – shock, horror!! – find enclosed a photocopy from the Complete Works of Will Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, beginning of Act IV Scene i:

1st Witch: Thrice the brinded cat hath mewed

2nd Witch: Thrice; and once the hedge-pig whin'd.

So you see, your question 'In the the same play, what animal whines three times during the witches' chant' has no answer, is a paradox – ask the Pilg what that is; he's played *The Hobbit* – because the cat *mews* three times but the hedge-pig *whines* once. So how can there be competition winners when there's no answer to the question? You may decipher from this that I didn't enter their ranks.

To boot, I sent for *Impossible Mission* and *Raid* in the middle of January with your subscription offer, and they still haven't arrived, even theough the first instalment of my subscription did. So where are they?

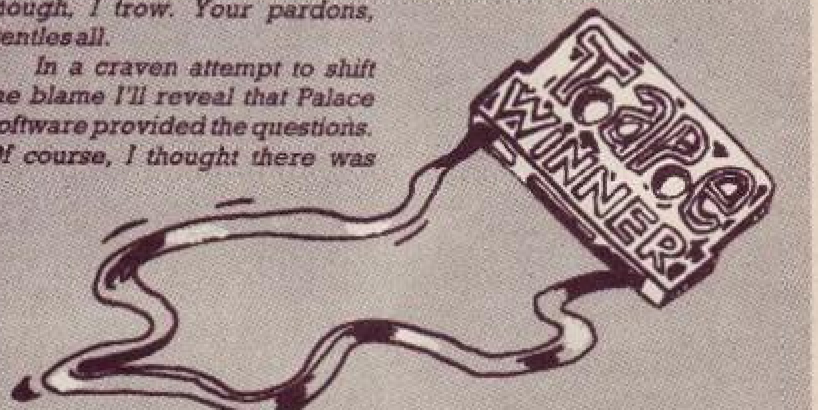
Jonathan Scott
Longridge, Preston

Saucy Scott! Dar'st though take arms against the might of Amstrad Action? 'Tis a fair cop, though, I trow. Your pardons, gentles all.

In a craven attempt to shift the blame I'll reveal that Palace Software provided the questions. Of course, I thought there was something a little odd, but I presumed they'd been reading the Quarto version rather than the First Folio that I'm more familiar with. And if you'll believe that you'll believe anything.

Still, we received enough answers of 'hedge-pig' to be able to award some genuine prizes. Next time we do a Shakespearean competition, we'll check the text a little more carefully.

Sadly, it's a fair cop on Impossible Mission too. See Ed-Lines for the gory details.







Minor criticisms

I think the magazine is brilliant but I have some minor layout criticsms:

1) Could you locate the Action Test at the start of the magazine because it's awkward trying to locate the start of the of the reviews.

The second complaint is about the actual layouts of the games reviews. The first and second pages area divided across the middle and I find this irritating, compared to the better 'full page' review, e.g., *Run for Gold, Issue 6, page 40. Apart from these complaints, Bob Wade & Co. are the best reviewers in any magazine, and the games review pages are first class.*

2) The maps of games are unfortunately the weakest part of the magazine. Many of the maps are very confusing and poorly illustrated.

3) The Ultimate duo – Knight Lore and *Alien 8* – have spawned an undesirable number of clones, as has *Daley Thompson's Joystick Wrecker*. Arguably, there have been improvements , but have we come to the stage where every fourth or fifth game uses the 3D view technique? I'm sure people would like a change. On the subject of Ultimate, they have had advertisemehts in AA for the last four months about their new games – where are they?

4) About the rumours of a 512K machine. this would be a developement and, unfortunately, a drawback. Are we to see another 664 burial of the PCW8256? This policy of new machines to replace six-months-old ones is going to damage Amstrad's reputation. I own a monochrome 464 and I think that the people who criticise the 664 owners are wrong, because it was terrible to scrap the 664 after selling so many. I hope the same doesn't happen to the 256K owners.

Joseph Doyle
Waterford, Eire

Unfortunately, a single page is often not enough for a major review – we've got to fit on all the scribbling, plus our superb screenshots.

Maps – I disagree. I think they're nearly always clear and cleverly drawn. There are, though, occasional errors.

There's nothing wrong with a 3D game as long as it's got something original to offer. Some, though, are real bores. But take a look at his months's Mastergame – it's pretty impressive.



Amstrad convert

This is the first time I have ever written to any magazine in my short but eventful life. You see, I'm one of these people who've owned a host of computers from the black and white finger stubber (for those uninitiated in compuspeak, that means the Sinclair ZX 81) through the VIC 20, the TI 99, the Spectrum Plus and finally then Arnold. I was never really satisfied with the computers that I owned because they were usually too limited to do anything with – either the software was too expensive or you needed a RAMpack to run any of the good software. Once you did get the expansion packs, however, you found that there really wasn't enough good software around to justify paying out the amount for the pack.

Then one fateful day I was watching the computer slot on Anglia TV's magazine program where they showed the launch of the CPC 464. I flipped – a British company had done it again. My first reaction was 'not another computer to make life more difficult for the buyer', but as I listened to the specification I thought 'how can anyone buy anything else?'

A few months later I had saved up enough money to buy the basic colour system and the game *Dark Star*. All I needed to do then was to sell my upgraded Spectrum. Luckily I found a gullible, but intelligent, friend to buy my Spectrum plus microdrive so that I could buy some more software. This, at first, wasn't easy because there was no real Amstrad reviews magazine, until AA came along, of course. Since then it has been fairly easy to choose software.

There is a lot of good Amstrad software around now and it is good to see some of it appearing first on the Amstrad – *Yie Ar Kung Fu* and *Spin Dizzy* being prime examples. I hope that in future there will be software that is exclusive to the Amstrad. Of course, this would have to be up to the standards that Amstrad owners are now used to.

I have just purchased *Elite*, which I decided to do after reading several reviews, and once I had finished playing it for the first time I decided to re-read your review. Why didn't you mention the wonderful rendition of *The Blue Danube* that plays all the way through? Is Bob Wade deaf or is he just swamped by all those reviews he has to do? Sorry, Bob, it had to be said. I also purchased *TLL*. My God, how do they do it? That has to be the best scrolling that has ever been seen on any home computer.

John Gigney
Chelmsford

Bob Wade is not the most musical person I know – he wouldn't recognise The Blue Danube if you dropped him in it. Still, it's a bad omission and, on behalf of Wade, I would like to apologise.



Berzerk

I own a 6128. I save my dinner money every week to buy a game. As it takes about three weeks to save enough money I go berzerk when I find the game is not compatible with my 6128.

You said *Chimera* would work so I bought it but it does not work. I have taken it back three or four times, but every time I see the same thing: Drive A: disc missing. Retry, Ignore or Cancel?

So I plead for 6128 owners to write to you and say which games are incompatible. Then you could keep and print a list of all the incompatible games.

If a game says 464/664 will it run on my 6128 and will all disc software run on the 6128?

David Hodgson
Bradford

It sounds to us, David, as if Chimera is not loading because you haven'tentered |Tape beforehand. The message is what you get if the computer thinks it is still operating on the disc system.[|

Drumkit tip

I've been planning writing this letter for a long time. It has proved a problem trying not to fall in to the categories outlined by R C Hawkins last issue.

Last month I subscribed to AA., which I am glad I did. One thing I was worried about was my copy not arriving before it got in the shops. So I'd just like to clear up any doubt in other readers' minds by saying it comes well before it arrives in the shops – which annoyed my non-subscribing friend Richard.

When it arrived I rapidly tore open the package and started looking through the game reviews to make sure that I don't miss a game that I couldn't live for another second without. Secondly, I look in Cheat Mode for fabulous pokes, which I love using.

Then your Type-ins page attracted mu attention with thte large words *Amstrad Drumkit*, which I rushed upstairrs to type in. I carefully proceeded to type it out and – wonder of wonders – when I ran it I only had one bug, which took seconds to correct. It was brilliant. I would like to thank John Keneally for it.

If any of your readers haven't typed it out I urge them to go and do so. It is one and half pages long but if you look the type is very big, and it doesn't take as long as you might think.

One piece of advice is to redefine the function keys – using Key and Keydef – to print "irythm", "ichan", "itime", and "Data". This makes makes typing it in much quicker, easier and more efficient. My only criticism is that when you run it you really need to erase the starter tune first, which can take quite a while.

Ben Lower
Wadhurst, Sussex

Punks

I bought my Amstrad 464 a few months ago and now I am devoted to it. I caught a look at your magazine about two months back and it hooked me. I like the idea of good news/bad news and the AA rating system. I've read other mags which were either very boring or too complicated.



I have an idea to boost the sales of AA by offering free bottles of some off that Somerton cider you're always drinking, and make some of us non-Somerton Amstrad owners happy as well as plastered

Punks do own Amstrads – my brother Gary is also an AA reader and we are both punks.

Bambi the Punk
Sheffield

And I always thought Bambi was a sweet little baby deer! Well, you live and learn, as the local philosophers say. It's nice to know we appeal to punks as well as...er..'normal' people. But Bambi – whatever you do, lay off the Somerton cider. If you could only see what it's done to Bob Wade...

More Danes

There is a time for everything. Now the time has come for me to join the ever-growing crowd of your subscribers of your magazine. That have three reasons. Firstly because you have the most 'serious' subscription offer yet seen in any Amstrad dedicated magazine. Secondly, it became very difficult to get my hands on the magazine at the local newsagent and it is far cheaper to subscribe. Thirdly, but not the least, you are producing a very entertaining, enlightening and addictive magazine.

My favourite columns are the ReAction, the Adventure pages and of course good reviews. Keep up with interviews with people behind the soft and hardware. Such things as High Score and Tip Top Ten I find of no use, a waste of good paper. (I do not suggest that you skip it!!)

One thing more. It is good that you do not fill the magazine with endless listings of useless programs. If anything should be written about programming and hardware use, then let it be some really deep hints. Even a seasoned programmer has something new to learn about Amstrad computers.

Even though Amstrad computers are the most sold here in Denmark last year – yes, I am one of those peace-loving Danes – it is still very difficult to get the newest software. And arrived, it costs a fortune. You think over there that Amstrad software are expensive, but here in Denmark the prices are much higher – e.g. *Laser Basic* UK £14.95, Denmark £22.00. So lot of us are ordering the programs directly from England, and that means, unfortunately, that illegal copies are on the Danish market before the original ones. So you software



Trainer's trauma

Sleepless nights, waking up in a cold sweat, wondering whether I would see another daylight hour. Long, nail-biting days spent worrying, one minute on a high, the next on a low, agonising over tactics. Should it be roadwork first, followed by co-ordination exercises, followed by massage of the finger muscles, followed by...? Had I left anything out? Was there more I could do?

Little did I realise these would be just a few of the emotions I would experience as a result of what I considered to be an inspirational purchase of my first computer – the Amstrad 6128, of course.

Who could imagine that as the trainer of a possible *Chuckie Egg* Champion – my daughter Tracy, 15 – such trauma could be experienced? And all without even laying a finger to the keyboard.

No doubt there have been claims of astronomical totals being recorded, since the published figure of 269,400 in the February issue of AA. Tracy is still going strong at a recorded 270,270. As a late entrant she still has some way to go yet. Has anyoone reached the magical ultimate screen? The boys seem to have it all their own way – there must be some girls out there who have similar claims.

No doubt the editor's postbag will be full of following this report on the *Chuckie Egg* race.

G.F. Dyne
Fleet, Hampshire

C. Egg *is a game that has obsessed many people over the past couple of years. I only hope your daughter does not become engrossed in games lasting 42 hours – an extreme, but well-documented case of CEggitis. At present the high score in AA is around 500,000. Should only take a few hours to get that.*





houses and distributors hurry with the exportation!

Lastly, a simple question. How can it be that we foreigners have to pay 25% in postage per item when buying from your mail-order service? It's over 30 Danish kroner (£1 = 12.5 kroner). If I have to send one program to the UK it will cost me 8 kroner. For the extra price you could send 3-4 cassettes!

As you can see I have circle around *Impossible Mission* and *Dambusters*. I hope the latter has now been released else I am patient.

Johnny Odgaard
Aarhus, Denmark

I'm glad you mentioned patience, Johnny, because you'll need a bit more of it. Both of your chosen games are delayed and probably won't be out till the middle of March.

We're looking into the matter of mail order prices, but it's a complicated business and a little outside my sphere of influence. I'll do my best, though.

Feeble finale

I am concerned about the feeble endings of what appear, or begin as, good games. Confused? Let me give you an example.

Arrive at *Logic* computer shop (nice shop), pick up a game by Gremlin Graphics called *Project Future*. Looks good. So I part company with £8.95. When I get home the first thing I do is load it up. I was immediately 'grabbed' (excuse the wording!). I found the game very hard, but after two weeks I had seven of the eight crystals. Then I found the eighth and took them all to the central computer. 'T minus 4.30' appears; must hurry; no lives to spare.

Somehow I get back and enter the critical area doorshaking with excitement, and WHAT do I get? – 'Congratulations you've destroyed the SS Future!' Two weeks of sweat for THAT!!!

Not one tune – which we are **promised** in the inlay card. I felt like crying! Do you feel like this after playing any other games?

Darren Lee
Sawbridgeworth, Herts

I often feel like crying when I play games, Darren – usually because I'm getting pasted by the computer. So think yourself lucky you've actually completed something. But I agree – there ought to be more reward for those brave enough and skilful enough to win through. But what?

Satisfied customer

I am writing about a number of things. First, I must congratulate the stafff for publishing what I consider the best Amstrad magazine, although as with everything, there is room for improvement. The new token system means that far less reduction can be gained, although this is most likely because the old system was making a loss.

It would be nice to see more colour photos. I know this might push the price up, but is it fair to snow a black and white pic of a title which is not at all informative?

Three cheers to Incentive for *Graphics Adventure Creator*. I love it. Although I have no great artistic flair it is very easy to produce good graphics. After initial problems with Lenslok – I had to reload it twice once – it now works like a dream.

Boo to 664 users. We 464 users, the lowest of the low in Amstrad circles, are sick to the teeth of your moaning. You got a good computer that will load most software on both tape and disk.



As many people now have utilities like *GAC* and *Laser Basic* and produce good software it would be advisable to have an article or series on publishng software – how to copyright, who to write to, profits, is it worth setting up on your own etc.

Can't wait till your next edition comes out – hurry!

Christopher Lamb
Stoke Poges

Your last suggestion is certainly one we'll think seriously about. We also would like to print more colour – lots more colour – but it really is very expensive indeed.

Fact and fantasy

Let me take you into the make-believe, unexplored world where fact mixes with fantasy –128K memory! You chose 664 owners moaning about their machines being discontinued all the time, but why did I buy a machine with extra memory if no-one's going to use it?

It's all very nice having a word-processor that can handle 80,000 characters – if you're writing a novel – or a database that can store 20,000 names and addresses – if you know 20,000 people. How,about some 128K games?

Just imagine *Yie Ar Kung Fu* with both mountain and temple in the same program and extra opponents, or the waggle games – *Hyper Sports, DT's Decathlon etc.* – with all the events together, *Exploding Fist* with more than one background...I could go on for ever, but I won't.

Now with the DK Tronics memory expansions the market should be big enough. So come on software houses – get cracking. There's even a possibility of mixing disc with 128K memory, giving 300K available.

Anon
Ramsgate, Kent

There are one or two 128K games on the way, Anon (couldn't read your writing I'm afraid). Meltdown, from Alligata, will be a much bigger game than on the other Amstrads. However, for the foreseeable future I think most games will continue to be developed on the 464, with the odd disc-based enhancement. This is mainly because there are still more 464s out there – and a 464 game is likely to run on the 6128, but not vice versa. Also because discs are still very expensive – and not all that many people want to spend £14-15 on a game.

The choice is *not* yours

I own a 464 which I got last Christmas. I can safely say that I'm well pleased with it.

Mastertronic should be heavily congratulated on their budget software success. Some of the games aren't exactly mega, but the majority of them are as good if not better than so-called full price games.

There is one thing that gets me really annoyed, which is when some readers write in to your brill mag and start slagging off other micros.

To finish off I'd like to say LONG LIVE AMSTRAD and AMSTRAD ACTION!! If I get letter of the month I would like (if I have a choice) *Who Dares Wins II.* If I've not got a choice then anything at all.

Andrew Mohan
Glossop

No, I'm afraid you haven't got a choice Andrew. You narrowly mised being a tape winner – better luck next time. But WDW II is well worth saving up for.



Buyer beware

Thanks for a great mag. Now down to business. I love the review system. The colour screen shots are crystal clear. But some of the mono ones are jsut obscure blobs. And why have all the features on software houses been about producers of arcade games? Why not one on an adventure house?

And please, please introduce some adventures into the subscription offers. And how about an Amsyclopaedia of adventure games?

I would also like to bring to the attention of readers certain retailers. On a recent trip to Liverpool my dad decided to buy *Computer Hits.* He couldn't find Amstrad software anywhere, and finally found a shop, *****, which sold a few titles. Not knowing much about software he bought *Oh Mummy* and *Bridge It* (yeugh). When I opened the cassettes, I discovered that they were part of the free software pack, with the 'Not for resale, given free' section scraped off.

On the subject of retailers, why is it that my local software supplier sells *Emerald Isle* at the same price as Level 9's other games – £15.50? And by the way, is there anywhere I can get a copy of AA1?

Mark White
Cork, Eire

You're right, Mark. We've neglected the adventurers a bit on the counts you mention. We hope to rectify that soon, as well as having a stunning special offer for adventurers if not in this issue, then the next.

As for retailers – well, you've got to be careful. 'Caveat Emptor', as Roman computer games freaks used to say. The shop you mention certainly seems to be indulging in a little sharp practice.

The first issue of AA is completely unavailable now, I'm afraid – that's the price of success.

Transmat update

As an avid reader of your very impressive magazine I read all the reviews, especially the serious software/utilities in which I am very interested. The reason I am writing is to do with one of these reviews – the review of the program *Transmat* by Pride Utilities in your February issue.

You state that 'a help sheet for specific program copying is not available yet'. This is far from so. I bought *Transmat* nearly a year ago and I have always had the best of service from them. With my copy a sheet told me about their *Transmat Information Exchange*, which costs £1. Since then they have produced five such sheets (for the slightly higher price of £2) with information for 90 programs.

Now that's out of the way I have just a few suggestions to make:

1. How about a few more reviews on the smaller hardware/add-ons?
2. A small section for small classified ads for sales, clubs penpals etc.
3. Finally, those listings. I have just spent half an afternoon typing out the drumkit program, and I thought it was great. BUT PLEASE can they be kept to this small size and not take up valuable space which could be used for something better!

Simon Weaver
Bridport, Dorset

Thanks for the info, Simon. I'm not sure what the ethical, or legal, implications of such a service are. But I can see that it makes life a lot easier for disk owners. We're looking into the possibility of small ads and a noticeboard.

How long is long?

I feel I had to write in to criticize your review in the February issue of *Elite.* In your Action Test section you state that no game gets written up until it's had a long and thorough test. So my question is 'How long is long?' Because if you had been playing the Amstrad version you would have found a bug that the software house, Firebird/Torus are aware of – after a time the game crashes. I, in fact, took a copy of the game back to where I bought it because it crashed after half an hour.

I telephoned Firebird the following day to ask if there was any reason why *Elite* should keep crashing and they explained that they knew all about it – there *was* a bug in the game which was causing it to crash, but they had no idea, a the time of writing, what was causing it, and said they would be putting advertisements in the magazines to advise those who had got the game.

On that basis I would like to know how, if the games are tested like you say they are, you did not come across the problem of this program crashing?

T Joyce
Luton

You've made an elementary logical error, humanoid, in concluding from the evidence of your own copy that all other copies behave in the same way. If you see a sheep with two heads, you don't jump to the conclusion that all sheep have the same problem.

Which is all by way of explaining that our review copy of Elite did not crash. Even a later copy we have got has managed to crash only once in several hours of play – the bug seems to be pretty random. You can rest easy at night, secure in the knowledge that AA's reviewing system is second to none.

Bugged

I ordered *Elite* from your mail orders service in Issue 5. But I soon discovered a fault in my copy. Every now and then the graphics turn purple and the game freezes. When this happens, all I can do is reset the machine and load the game again.

So, do I send the faulty copy back to the mail order service or to Firebird Software? I'd love a replacement, but if they're all like mine I'd definitely prefer a refund. Have any other readers experienced similar difficulties?

Iain MacIntyre
Glasgow

Lots of people have the same problem – you should send your tape back to Firebird, who will provide a replacement and a £2 voucher.

We, the readers

One of the most pleasing aspects of your magazine is the feeling that 'we' (i.e. the readers) really a part of it. The continuous input of high scores, game reviews, maps, type-ins etc. makes the magazine more varied and representative in content than many others.

Please keep up the light-hearted approach, as it is easy to read. Having spent hours painfully labouring through other magazines it is refreshing to find serious subjects treated in a way that can easily be understood.

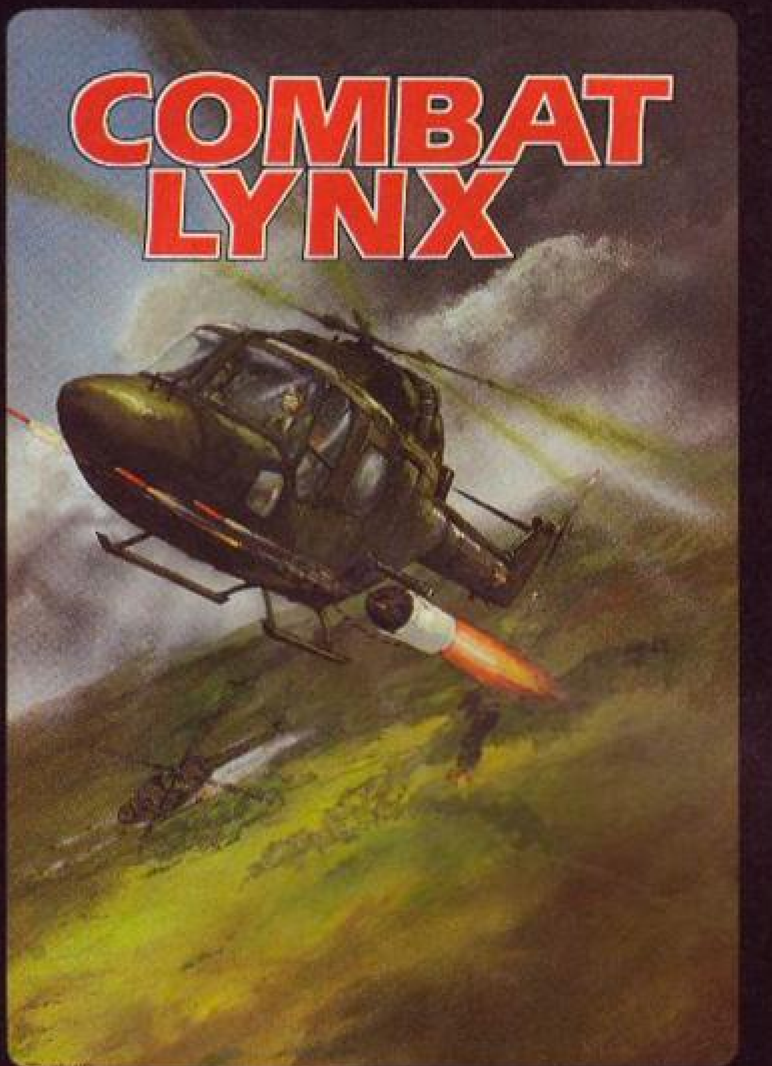
I read Amstrad Action mostly while waiting for long games to load. The problem is that I keep on reading the magazine and forget to play the game.

Tim Derricott
Stoke-on-Trent



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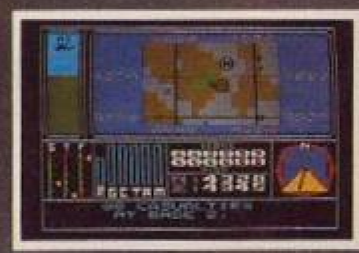


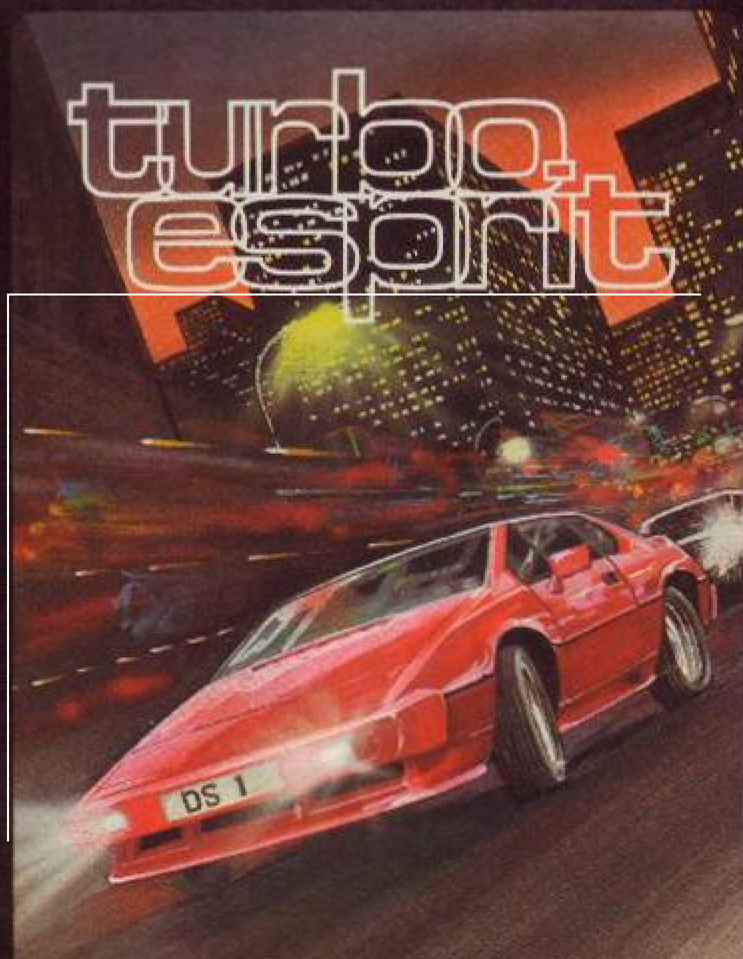
COMBAT LYNX (Air-to-ground Battle Simulation)

Spectrum 48k	£8.95
Commodore 64	£8.95
Amstrad 464/6128	£8.95
BBC/Electron	£8.95

"Combat Lynx is both simulation and shoot-em-up games in one. The 3D effect created by using contour line graphics tends to give it a more technical feel, so more like a simulation, but on the other hand there are lots of jets and enemy helicopters whizzing around and ground forces shooting at you which gives the game its instant playability appeal. Once you get the hang of coping with everything, it's possible to play a game of high strategy which involves not only arcade skills but those of forward planning. For people who enjoy strategy type games, Combat Lynx should provide hours of fun, while for those who prefer something instant and fast - choose skill level 4 and hang onto your hats! Generally the graphics are most impressive, with a few attribute problems when objects are about to become hidden, but these are minor in what is otherwise an engaging and challenging game."







TURBO ESPRIT (3D Simulation Car Chase)

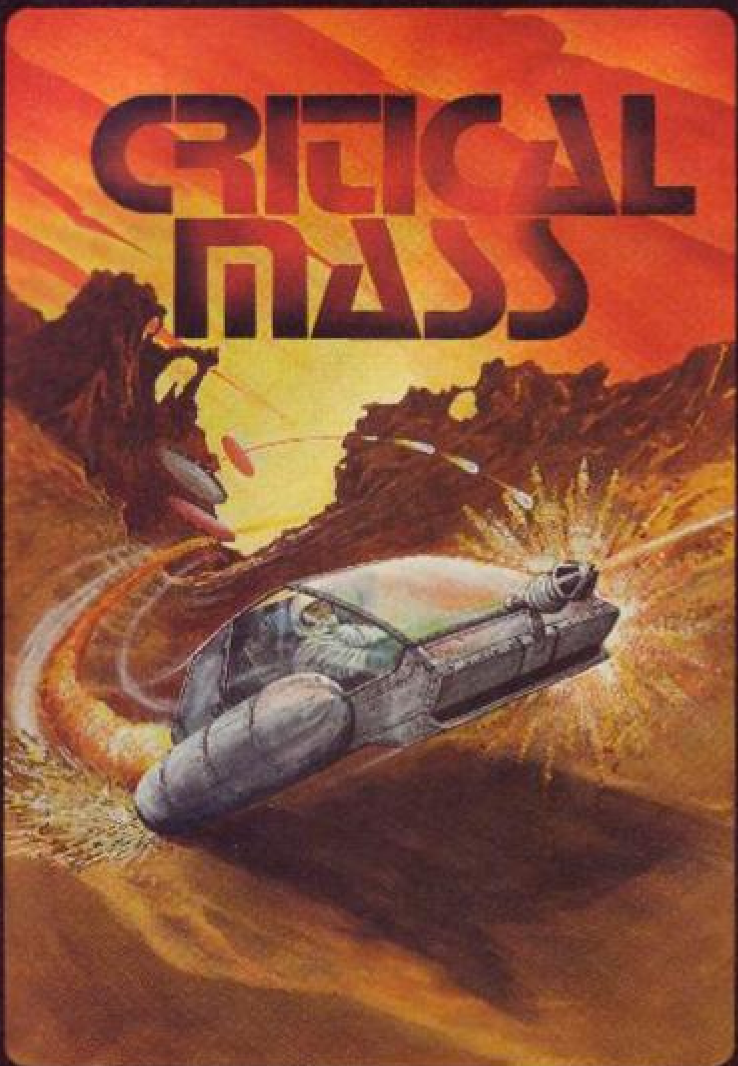
Spectrum 48k	£8.95
Commodore 64	£8.95
Amstrad 464/6128	£8.95

You are a special agent equipped with a Lotus Turbo Esprit. An international ring of drug smugglers are about to make a huge delivery of heroin, and must be stopped at all costs. The drugs are stored at a number of houses in the city, and will be taken by cars to an armoured van which will be cruising around the centre. A raid on the van before completion of the delivery would leave some of the drugs in circulation. Similarly a raid on any of the houses would alert them to your squad's activities. You must therefore try and pick-off the cars one by one before they make their drop, and then try to stop the van before it escapes. The delivery cars will be backed-up by 'hit' squads - so watch out!

(Developed with the support of Lotus Cars Ltd)





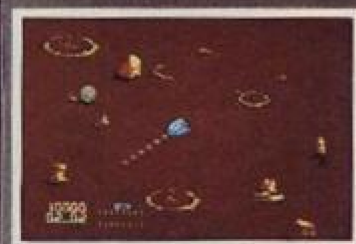


CRITICAL MASS (Arcade)

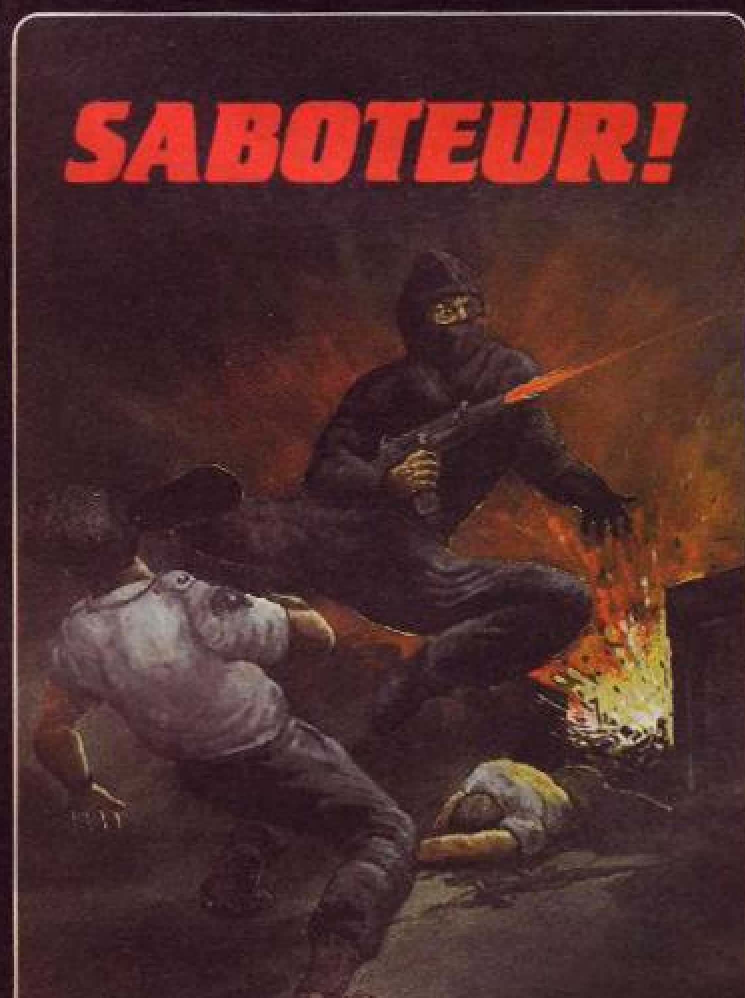
Spectrum 48k	£8.95
Commodore 64	£8.95
Amstrad 464/6128	£8.95

An outlying system of the Terra Federation has set up an advanced anti-matter conversion plant on a centrally positioned asteroid to supply the local colonists with energy. A surprise attack by alien forces has successfully overcome the asteroid's defences and the aliens are now threatening to self-destruct the power plant unless the colonists offer an unconditional surrender. The self-destruction process would effectively turn the power plant into a massive black hole that would wipe out the entire planetary system along with a number of nearby stars. Unconditional surrender offers an equally horrific prospect. Your mission is to infiltrate the enemy position and disable the anti-matter plant before the aliens achieve CRITICAL MASS.

"This is the biz!......The graphics and playability of this game are superb, making it well worth the money."







SABOTEUR (Martial Arts Arcade Adventure)

Spectrum 48k	£8.95
Amstrad 464/6128	£8.95
Commodore 64	£8.95

You are a highly skilled mercenary trained in the martial arts. You are employed to infiltrate a central security building which is disguised as a warehouse. You must steal a disk that contains the names of all the rebel leaders before its information is sent to the outlying security stations. You are working against the clock, both in getting to the disk, and in making your escape. You must enter the building from the sea by rubber dinghy, and will then only be able to leave by the helicopter on the roof. You will have to find your way around the warehouse, making use of the guards' own weapon supplies in your struggle through overwhelming odds.

"Saboteur is without a doubt one of the best arcade games I've seen for a long time and a welcome departure from the plethora of licenced/endorsed product that the industry seems to currently favour. Recommended."



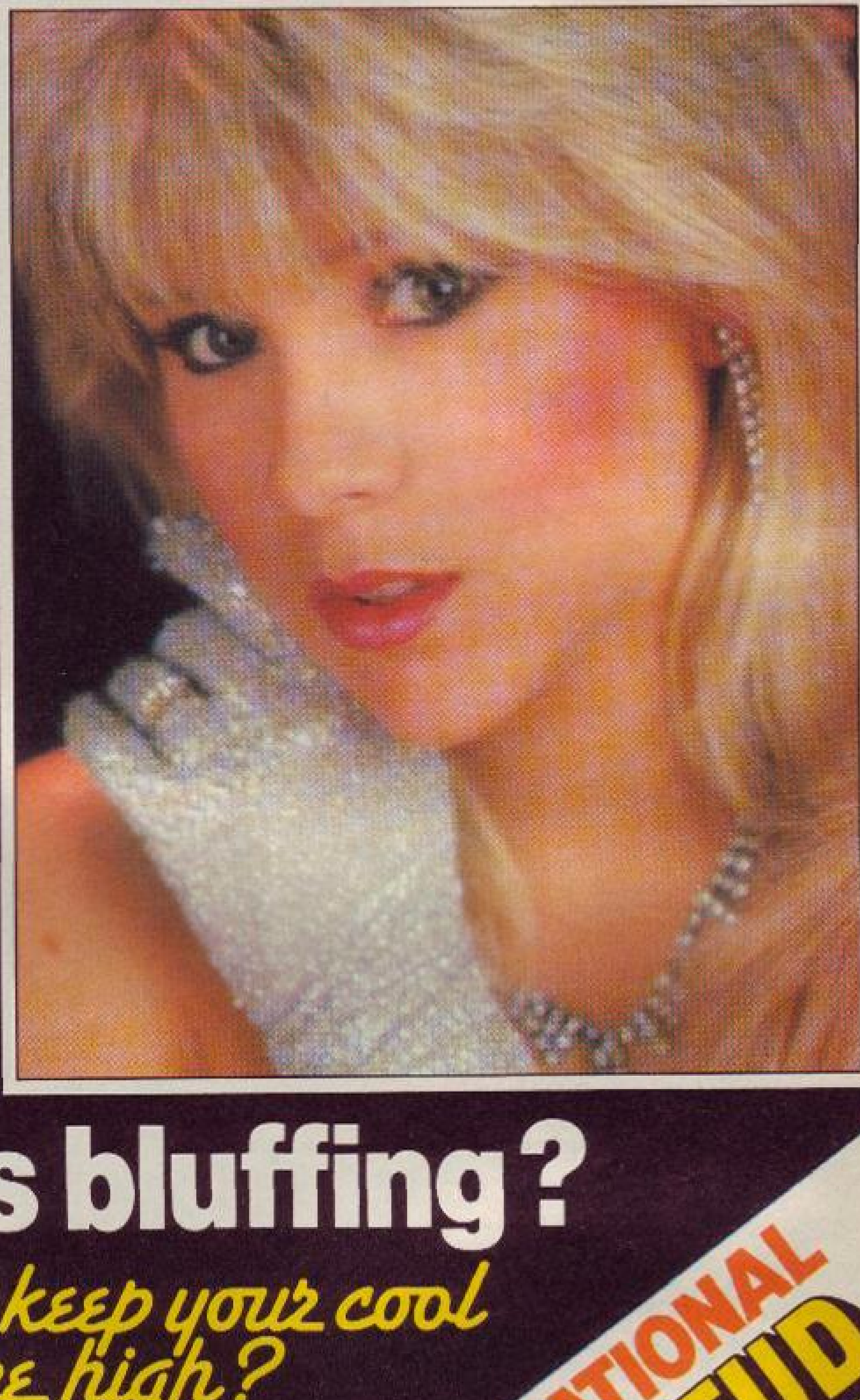


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Sugar hits jackpot

Amstrad's recently announced £27.5 million half-yearly profits staggered financial observers and made Alan Sugar an even richer rich man. In the space of just two days his personal fortune increased by around £30 million.

In the six months to December 1985 Amstrad's sales increased from £69 million to £128 million. As a result, the company's share price shot up by 56p in the two days following the announcement. Revised estimates of Amstrad's profits for the whole year are now put at around £50 million. The huge profits are explained largely by the sale of computers, which now comprise 81% of Amstrad's business. The PCW 8256 alone now accounts for around 20% of the company's turnover.

The foreign market, too, is becoming increasingly important. Over half Amstrad's business is done abroad, a proportion which is likely to increase even further in the coming months. Amstrad computers are now the market leaders in France and are becoming increasingly popular in Germany and Spain.

The rumoured new machines – IBM clone and PCW 512K – are now thought to be scheduled for release later in the year rather than in summer, as was previously suspected.

Headroom at the top

Of Quicksilva's spring releases, that is. The computer-generated – or is it TV-generated? – hero is to star in a game based on his film *20 Minutes into the future*. The player takes the role of a computer program, the Maxhunter, which has to help Edison Carter save Headroom from captivity in a TV station. Should be on your screens very soon.

Also coming soon is primitive hero Fred Flintstone, in *Yabba Dabba Doo*. The game promises to deliver cartoon-style graphics and a healthy dose of humour.





GAC Plus

Incentive's highly successful *Graphic Adventure Creator* is to have a disk-based big brother called, imaginatively enough, *GAC Plus*. As well as offering a music editor and *Quill*-style merging, this will allow you to write disk adventures of 150K or more. It's not due out till the summer, but it could take you till then just to get your first 100k written.

Existing users will be offered the chance to upgrade, but there's no price for this yet – or indeed for the package itself. In the meantime, owners can get a leaflet of additional *GAC* information by sending an SAE to *Incentive, 54 London St, Reading.*



Amsnet is Go!

Amsnet – the Amstrad section of Prestel's Viewfax – have now got their telesoftware problems sorted out. Their sophisticated new system will allow the downloading of any program, regardless of format. It can handle machine code, protected Basic, and modular programs of any size – during tests, it even managed to download *Sorcery Plus*.

The problem now is that some modems just aren't up to this kind of task. In fact, Amsnet recommend only two – Skywave's Multiport, and the Pace/Honeysoft package. Amsnet are at pains to point out that they're testing other modems at the moment, and aren't in any way trying to push Honeysoft or Skywave. Quite simply, a user gets charged the same for a failed download as for a success – so the wrong modem can cost you money.

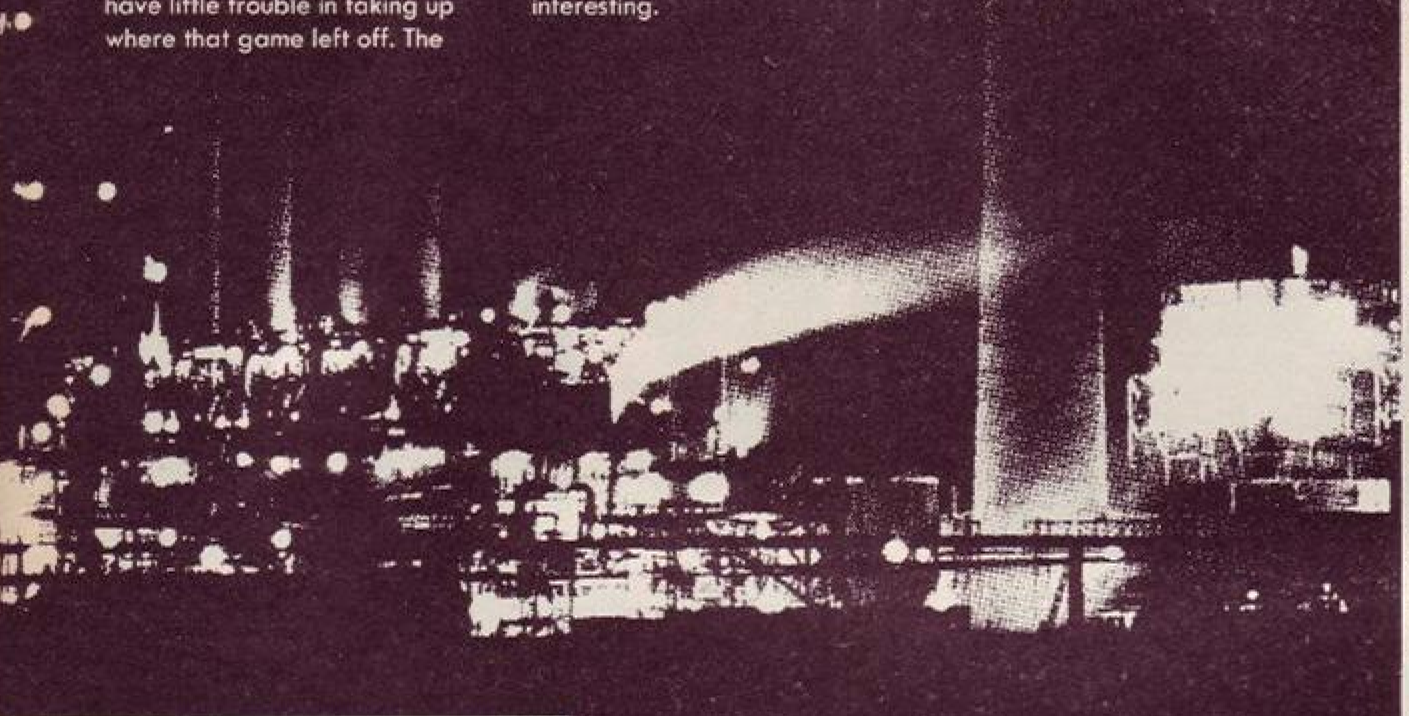
Since their launch at the October Amstrad show, Amsnet have gained around 1000 subscribers, and that's growing all the time – they hope to have ten times as many by the end of the year.

Forbidden Planet

The follow-up to Design Design's *Dark Star* is well under way, as visit to the company's Manchester GHQ revealed. After programmer Simon Brattel was rudely awakened by the explosion of a firework outside his bedroom door, he emerged to demonstrate the very impressive graphics and gameplay of the new game.

Players of *Dark Star* should have little trouble in taking up where that game left off. The idea is to collect codes from the 16 different stores where they are kept. Design Design assure us that the game will be 'very difficult' and that it will be mappable. The action is certainly fast, the mental effort will be furious. Look for a review next month of this and *2112 AD*, an arcade-adventure set in a totalitarian future. Graphics and gameplay on this look pretty interesting.





More chocks away

Mirrorsoft have acquired the games rights to the film *Biggles – The Untold Story*. The film should hit the cinema screens in a couple of months, but the game won't hit Arnold's screen until the summer – probably around June.

Mirrorsoft say that although there is 'a certain amoount of airborne activity' the game will not be a flight simulator. It will have several sections, ciulminating in a sequence where Biggles has to destroy the German secret weapon that could have changed the course of history. Should go down well in Schneider country.

Phantom for Arnold

That favourite monster of the cinema screen, The Phantom of the Opera, will soon be making his debut on the Amstrad. He will star in an arcade adventure game to be called, strangely enough, *The Phantom of the Opera – The Computer Game*, due for release around Easter this year.

Set in the Paris Opera House and the sewers beneath, the story deals with the love of a horribly disfigured musician for a young singer. The game is being written by John Ransley, but is likely to be released through a major software house.

There seems to be a lot of interest in the pathetic figure of the Phantom at the moment: Andrew Lloyd Webber has a musical on the theme opening later in the year, and a single from that is already high in the charts.

Joystick Adaptor

Lightwave's Joystick Y adaptor, which allows you to use two *normal* sticks on the Arnold, is now available. The adaptor costs £4.55 and plugs into the joystick port. We're not sure as yet just how it functions with the available software, but we'll definitely be taking a close look in the next issue.

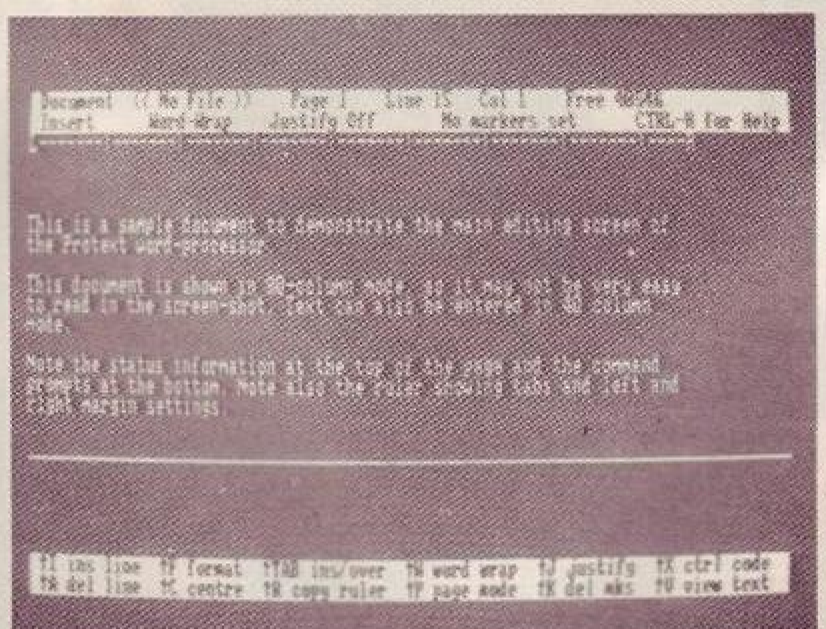
AA on Amsnet shock

Yes, it's happened. New technology has finally reached this part of Somerset. We have a modem. We have a telephone. We are on line!

So now you can save yourself a fortune in stamps and run up a fortune in telephone bills by writing to us direct on Amsnet, the Amstrad-dedicated part of Prestel. Our mailbox number is the same as our phone number, 045874011, although you may be puzzled to find the mailbox in the name of Mr C J Anderson. He is none other than our publisher, the only one of us who can afford a Prestel account! Ignore him, just write to Amstrad Action.

Any letters we receive are liable to published in Reaction, but unfortunately we cannot guarantee personal replies. This is because of the need to have to spend the bulk our time producing a magazine. Shame, isn't it.

Oh, and greetings to Steven Dunn of Cookham, Berks who was the first of many to write to us on our first day on line.



Arnor's latest

Two new products from ROM specialists Arnor offer mailmerge and spell-checking for *Protext* users. *Prospell* boasts a 30,000 word dictionary and a 2000 wpm check rate – and it can also handle files from other word processors. *Promerge+* offers the usual merge features plussome *Protext* extensions – notably background printing, but there are a few other goodies too. The programs will cost you £24.95 each on disk, or £34.95 on EPROM.

Heavy on the Magi

Is the title of the next rele from Gargoyle. It's anot room-based game, with a str influence from *Dungeons Dragons*. Gargoyle say t there will be over 200 locatio by the time it's finished and th besides the expected class graphics, there will be a ne command language. Further de tails next month.

AMSTRAD

Arcade

Killer-by

fr

Ko

YIE AR KUNG FU

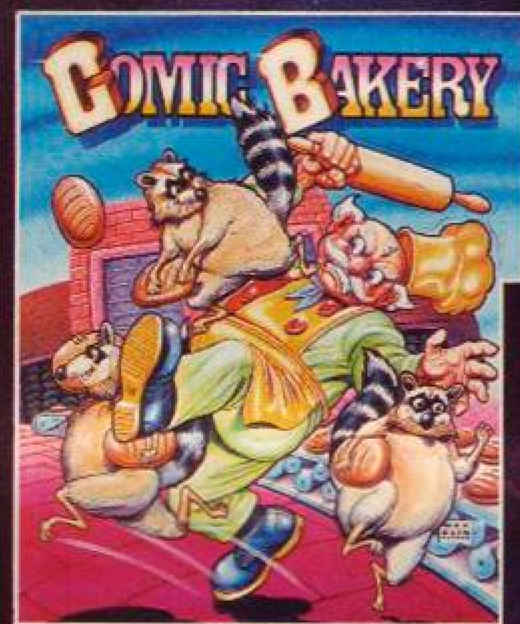
If you can master the ten moves, expect the unexpected and FIGHT for your LIFE against the formidable masters of the martial arts you may live to meet them again on the mountain or in the Temple.

COMIC BAKERY

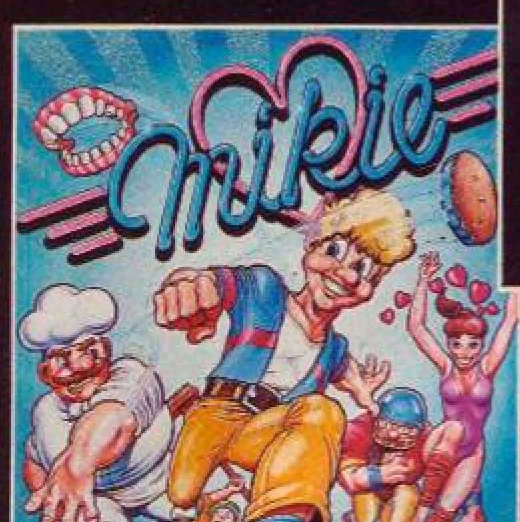
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*Another red-hot Konami cookie!

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PING PONG

You can almost feel the tension of the big match breaking through the screen...the expectant crowd is almost on top of you! You return the service with a top spin backhand, then a forward back-spin, the ball bounces high from your opponent's looping, defensive lob...SMASH!...a great shot opens the score...but this is only your first point! Play head to head or against the computer in this, Konami's first and best table-tennis simulation.

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Of Mice a

Art teacher Brian Larkman gets his hands on the latest software for the AMX mouse.

Despite Apple's displeasure – and it was not even their idea to begin with – a whole rash of copies of the Macintosh WIMPS environment have been appearing for the smaller home micros in the last year. Probably the best known of these in Britain is the AMX Mouse, produced by Advanced Memory Systems of Warrington. First they graced the Beeb with one of these long tailed friends, then our very own AMSTRAD received a 'mouse organ'. Now the software has been improved with colour and a Utilities suite is soon to be available. Are these improvements of any real advantage?

Having used both the AMX *Art* and *Superart* packages on the Beebs at the art college where I teach, I was extremely disappointed with my first experience of the Amstrad version at the October '85 Novotel exhibition. The screen handling was very jerky and slow, the facilities offered were limited (especially compared to *Superart*) and the interface was an appallingly ramshackle black box with leads snaking about and connectors apparently held together with black tape; no, not a pre-production job, these were for sale! I went home mouseless.

Novotel 2 arrives and the cash for some sort of input device other than the mouse is burning my pocket. But what do I find –the seedy pauper-mouse has become a fat town-mouse. Lots more facilities, ZOOM, COLOUR, far faster and smoother screen movement (which means in effect much smoother curves), but still thatghastly interface plugging into the joystick port. What's wrong with the expansion port; surely that would allow a single connection

HAPPY EASTER! The eggs were reduced and then cut and pasted repeatedly



without messing with the 5v power socket? If DK'Tronics can produce a decent, attractive box, (though, as usual, not fitting the 664 properly), why can AMS not manage it? And what's this? The mouse itself has been transformed from a rather sophisticated hand hugging device into a tacky plastic box.

In practice, to be fair, the system does work well, in fact the new mouse, changed I suppose for economic reasons, works better than the old one. I even bought one! The slippery steel ball is replaced by a much smoother acting nylon one and it is this change, I suspect, that has most transformed the feel of the mouse in use. And it does feel good, especially with a little practice. Of the medium priced input devices for the Amstrad, only Grafpad II can compare, and the software with that just does not make it yet. Any on-screen, drawing package on any micro that does not include a zoom facility is not worth considering unless you enjoy terminal eyestrain.

The Options

The most important of the new facilities for accurate on-screen drawing is undoubtedly ZOOM, though the most obvious is of course the inclusion of COLOUR.

Selecting ZOOM from the options menu changes the pointer

ALEC – demonstrates the use of reduction and mirroring



The WIMPs environment

The WIMPS system – *windows, icons, mouse, pointer* – system allows the almost completely computer illiterate (as well as the whizzlest of whizz kids) to operate a complex program without touching the keyboard. Instead, the user moves a cursor – the pointer – around the screen using a hand held box – the mouse – with a nylon ball underneath it. As the mouse and its ball are moved, details of the movement are sent to the screen along a cable connected to the computer – the mouse's tail. On screen small pictures – the icons – represent the functions of the program. These can be executed by moving the pointer over an icon and pressing a button on the mouse. Other options can be displayed and executed by *pulling down* menus (windows) from the top of the screen. Almost any program can be adapted to operate simply in this environment.

What all this means to us is that even the most nervous can easily use a computer without fear of turning into a machine themselves! Potentially, at least, computing has finally become truly accessible.

nd Wimps

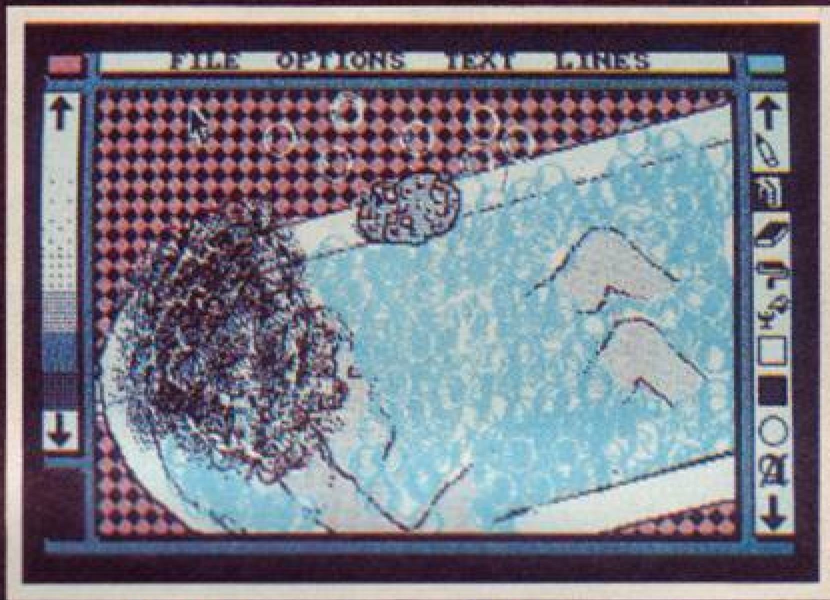
into a small box, used to pinpoint the area to be magnified. Once this has been chosen a box appears on the opposite side of the screen containing the pixels within the pointer box enlarged to the size of character squares. The colour of these can now be easily changed from the pallette provided, allowing detailed work and tidying-up. It is also possible to scroll the enlarged area about, using either the move button or the arrows in the zoom window. Now you can uncross your Mona Lisa's eyes.

Colour can be used in either one of two ways: by changing the colour of the pens in the Lines Menu, or by selecting Paint from the Options Menu.

Selecting Pen 2 or 3 allows all the line and spray functions to be used in any two of the 25 colours available ie. those other than the black and white already in use.

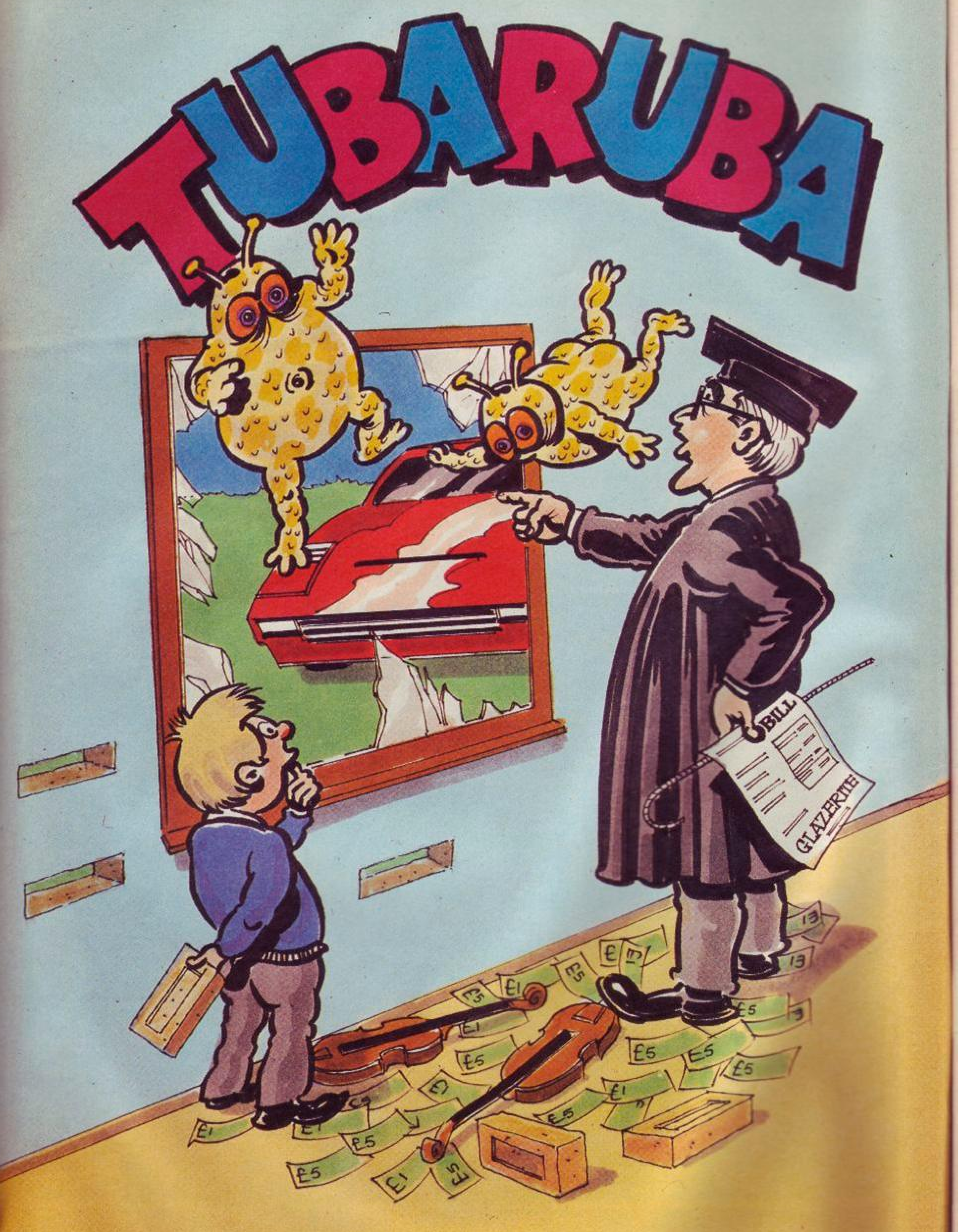
Selecting the Fill icon and then Paint provides a new set of fill

BATHING – bubbles were all drawn using airbrush and bubble icon



LANCRIGG HOUSE – most of the colours here are colour fills





Advance Software Promotions

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CA

patterns, this time in full technicolour – well, at least in quadricolour. These patterns can only be used as straight fills, not as spray patterns, which is something of a disadvantage. But that's soon forgotten with the pleasure of using colour.

Together with COPY – the option to copy and move areas of the screen about – zoom and colour make up the most important changes to the original AMX *Art* package. By the time this article is published, AMS should also have released a *Utilities* and *Colour* Disc. For those who bought the original b & w software, *Utilities* contains the new colour version of *Art*, including zoom as described above. In addition to this however is a suite of 'tools' that is really quite sophisticated, providing facilities not even available in *Superart*.

Utilities

These utilities are provided as a separate program into which pictures produced using AMX *Art* can be loaded. This is really rather a shame. It would have been nice if they had been available from the main *Art* screen.

The screen display is similar to that of *Art*, but simpler. The main drawing screen is bordered on either side with a single line of icons, and at the top by a message window. The icons on the left are mainly for file commands such as DIRECTORY, LOAD and SAVE AMX pictures, and bar commands. The right side is the one with most of the surprises, however, for here lurk the transform icons. These are all executed by selecting an area using a variable size or 'rubber banded' box.

Starting from the top icon you can quickly and easily:

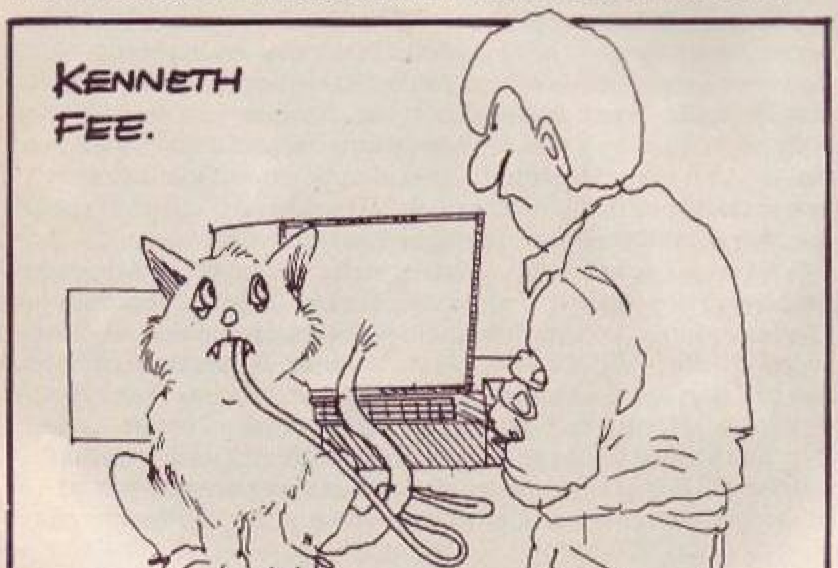
- ► enlarge or reduce an area.
- ► scroll an area along either the x or y axis.
- ► mirror an area about either its x or y axis.
- ► turn an area through a right angle either clockwise or anticlockwise.

CUT & PASTE

The most spectacular utility I have been saving till last – Cut and Paste. On the left side is a 'clipboard' icon which initiates an option to cut or move an area.

If CUT is selected, the area defined is saved to memory. A number of these 'cuts' can be stored, though the memory available is limited on the 464 and 664 (even with DK'Tronics memory). Nevertheless cuts can be saved to disc or tape as a separate file which should get round this problem. With the 6128 there is a much large 'cuts' memory area.

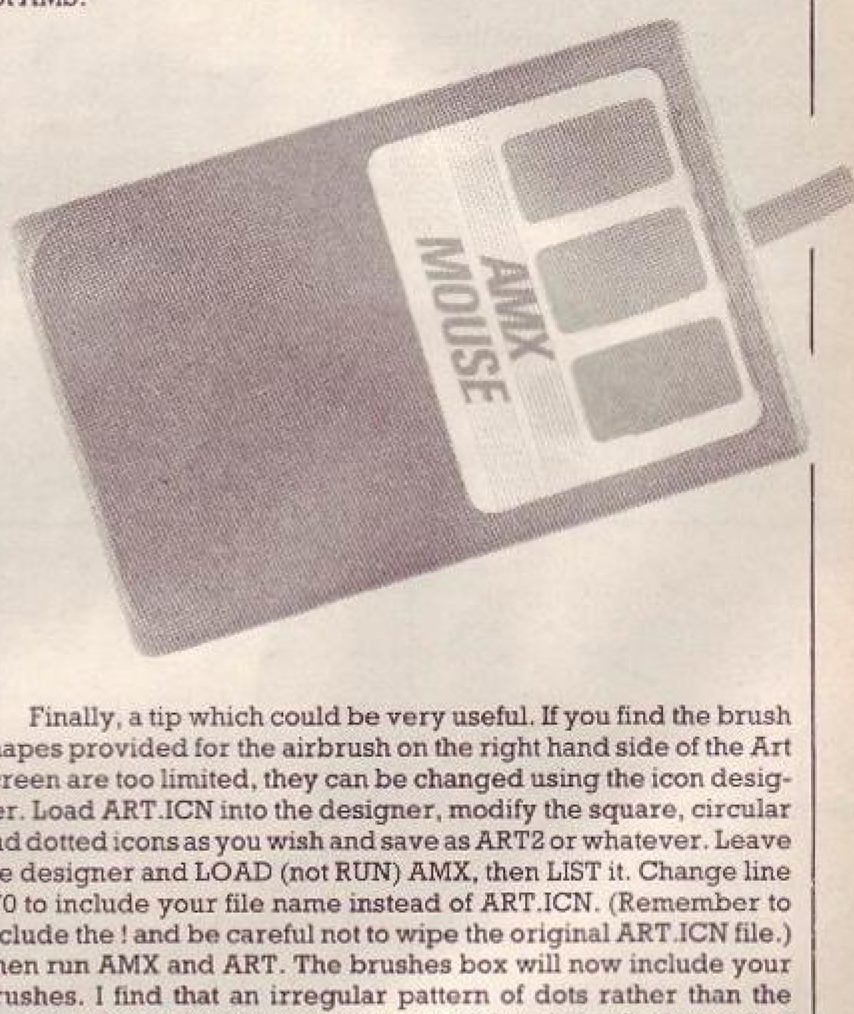
Selecting PASTE brings back a named 'cut' which can be placed anywhere on the screen. And this is the really spectacular bit! The cut can, by holding down the execute button, be used as a brush, repeating itself many times per second, anywhere and everywhere. Wonderful!! This brush may even have a transparent background available so as not to overwrite the detail it is placed next to, though this was not available on the version that I tried.



If the final version of *Utilities* lives up to the promises of Cygnet Software who are writing all the Amstrad AMX package, it will transform the AMX mouse from what is virtually a toy, into a very useful graphics tool. Nevertheless there are still some criticisms and plenty of room for improvement.

Unfortunately, as with *Pattern Designer* and *Icon Designer*, you have to leave the *Art* program to use *Utilities*, after first saving your masterpiece. A truly sophisticated package would allow the use of all these facilities at once, even if overlays from disc had to be implemented (and with the 6128 or a 'cooperative' memory expansion this should be quick and easy). If this is not practical or economic at present, then the *Art* program should at least have a 'menu' option so as not to force the user to reload AMX *Control* each time pattern design, icon design or a utility is required.

The most useful utility of all (considering the limitations on screen size imposed by the WIMPS environment), would be the ability to 'pan' about a larger than screen size picture area. Firebird's *Screen Artist* allows the whole screen to be used by scrolling down the area beneath the menus. *Superart* provides a much larger than screen size drawing area using overlays from disc. This is slow and clumsy on a Beeb but should be simple on an Amstrad, especially a 6128. In fact Amsoft are probably bringing out a drafting package soon that operates in just this way, so why not AMS?



Finally, a tip which could be very useful. If you find the brush shapes provided for the airbrush on the right hand side of the Art screen are too limited, they can be changed using the icon designer. Load ART.ICN into the designer, modify the square, circular and dotted icons as you wish and save as ART2 or whatever. Leave the designer and LOAD (not RUN) AMX, then LIST it. Change line 170 to include your file name instead of ART.ICN. (Remember to include the ! and be careful not to wipe the original ART.ICN file.) Then run AMX and ART. The brushes box will now include your brushes. I find that an irregular pattern of dots rather than the square ones provided is much more useful, and simple shapes like cubes and spheres are easy to design and useful in many circumstances. Happy mousing cats!!!

G O O D N E W S

- ► **Zoom is vital.**
- ► **Colour.**
- ► **Useful utilities (especially cut and paste).**

B A D N E W S

- ► **Ramshakle spaghetti interface.**
- ► **No access to *Utilities* from *Art* program.**
- ► **No menu.**

Brainstorm

Lots of lovely ideas but not a clue what to do with them? *Andrew Wilton* sees if Caxton's 'ideas processor' can help.

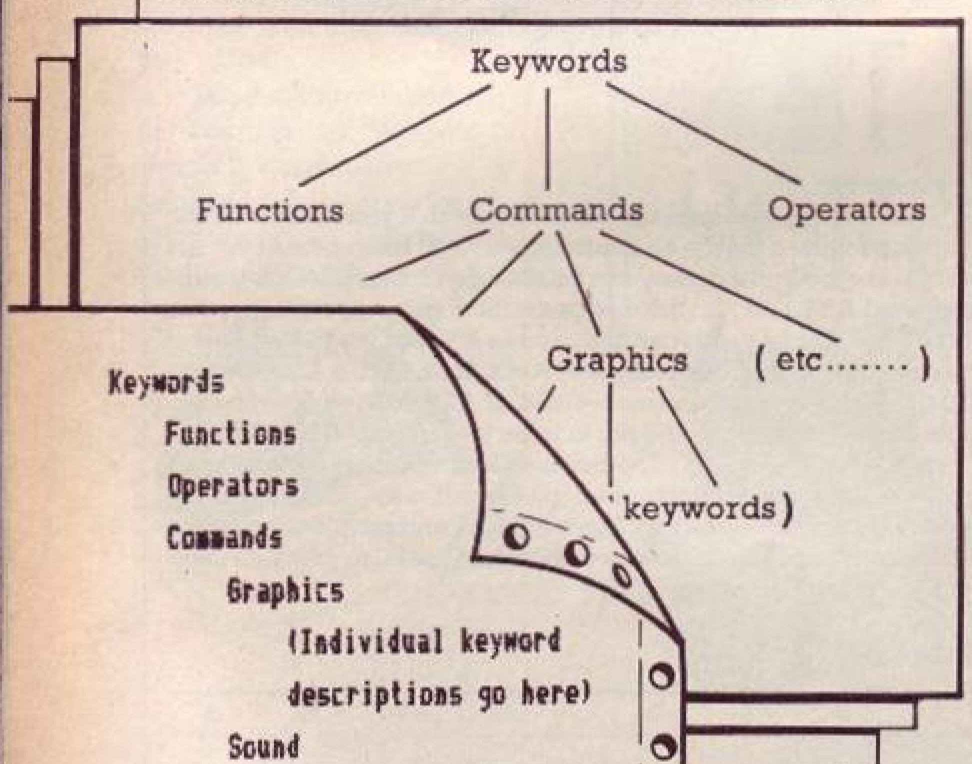
BRAINSTORM
Caxton, £49.95 disc
CPC 6128, PCW 8256

Caxton call this an "ideas processor", and that's a fair description – it's intended as a way of organising muddled ideas into a usable form. If you have a lot of creative thinking to do and find yourself juggling concepts the whole time, the traditional solution is a pencil and paper. *Brainstorm* sets out to do the same job, only better.

Brainstorm is one of those programs that are much easier to use than to describe. The ease of use is an essential feature of the thinking behind the program – that it should keep up with and assist the flow of your ideas, rather than distracting you with details of operation. The concepts it uses are for the most part simple, but completely abstract. This gives Brainstorm the flexibility to deal with a wide variety of creative tasks, but also forces unfamiliar terms on the user. It is not a matter of jargon for jargon's sake – the terms are kept to a minimum, but much of what the program does is quite unique. Where word processors can borrow typing terms, *Brainstorm* has to start from scratch.

The Model

The only term you'll need to know to start with is **model**. Quite simply, the model is the mass of information you type in – the collection of ideas you want to structure. As a word processor manipulates text, so *Brainstorm* manipulates a model.



The Amstrad version of *Brainstorm* consists of one program, BRAIN.COM, and a sample model. On loading you are presented with the copyright screen swiftly followed by the master menu. Choices here include a range of disk and print-out options, but topping the list is the all important **Use** command. This switches you to the editing screen, where you can access and manipulate the model itself.

The *Brainstorm* editing screen consists of a heading and a list of one-line entries, with a help window below them. When a blank model is first Used, the heading and list are both empty. Text typed in at this point will form the first entry on the list. The text will word-wrap into subsequent entries, or can be forced into them by using the <return> key.

The first heading serves as the title for the model, and the entries as its subtitles. Thus, if you were trying to write, say, a manual describing Basic keywords you would enter "Keywords" as the heading followed by "Functions","Operators" and "Commands" as entries.

Having set out the main sections of the manual in this way, you can divide each of them into sub-sections by a process called **promotion**. Simply select an entry from the list, press <ctrl>.R and the entry becomes the heading for a new list. This can be filled with entries in the same way as before. These can themselves be promoted and sub-divided – and so on, to as many levels of detail as desired.

In the example above, "Commands" could be divided into "Graphics", "Sound", "Input/output" etc., and these could in turn be divided into smaller categories or individual keywords. At the lowest level, the keyword descriptions can be typed in directly, taking advantage of the word-wrap on list entries.

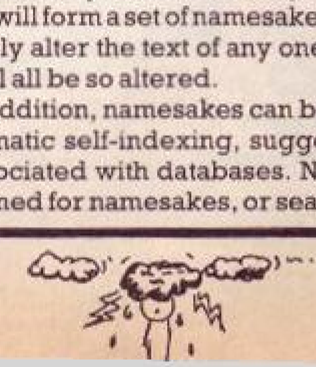
Namesakes

This repeated sub-division imposes a tree structure on your ideas, and this probably matches most people's thought processes quite well – but the structuring does not end there.

If a new entry's wording matches that of an existing one, the two are said to be **namesakes**, and are linked together in certain ways. All namesakes have a common set of **descendants** – sub-divisions – and any alterations you make to an entry's wording will also be made to any namesakes it has. Nor are you restricted to pairs of namesakes – you can create large sets of them. These sets can then be joined together – you simply amend the wording of one set to duplicate that of the other – or scanned through at speed in either direction, short-circuiting the tree structure.

Namesakes are a powerful feature of *Brainstorm* – they can help avoid a great deal of repetition, for one thing. To return to the above example, you might want to place a warning under entries such as "NEW", "DELETE", "POKE" etc to the effect that careless use can corrupt the user's current program. Rather than type in this same warning several times, you need merely type "warning" as an entry under each keyword heading. These "warning" entries will form a set of namesakes. Once they have all been typed in, simply alter the text of any one of them to the full wording and they will all be so altered.

In addition, namesakes can be used to give *Brainstorm* a kind of automatic self-indexing, suggesting applications more normally associated with databases. Notes entered quite casually can be scanned for namesakes, or searched using the **hunt** command.



What's more, every namesake is tagged with a number in the margin indicating the size of the namesake set it belongs to. It would be quite possible – if you wanted – to set up an informal card-box as part of a model, and link it in to a piece of text. The possibilities are endless – the difficulty could well be your imagination, rather than the program's flexibility.

G O O D N E W S

- ▶ **Performs a unique and valuable task.**
- ▶ **Exchanges data freely with most word processors.**
- ▶ **Easy and natural to use.**

B A D N E W S

- ▶ **You might still prefer a pencil and paper.**

Conclusion

Brainstorm is a program of such general application that it can be hard to pin down to specific uses. As a word processor, it lacks the power to compete with conventional, specialised alternatives – but then, it doesn't set out to. Once it has taken the document – if that's what your model is destined to be – as far as it comfortably can, you can write the text to disk in ASCII and finish the editing with your favourite word processor. Equally, you can load any ASCII file into a *Brainstorm* model – although the text will all load in as entries of one list, you can easily structure it with the powerful editing commands **put** and **get**.

Brainstorm is a truly original program, and it is no easy matter to assess the value for money it represents. For many, it will prove an invaluable partner for their word processor – anyone programming with a compatible assembler or compiler would also find it an enormous help, I suspect. It is unlikely, however, to appeal as a stand-alone – despite a flexible set of editing and print out commands, it simply isn't as immediately useful as a conventional w/p.

Typing tutors

Typing skills are useful – even essential – for almost all types of serious or hobby computing. Has Arnold got what it takes to teach you touch-typing?

IANKEY
Iansyst, £29.00 disk
CPC 6128, PCW 8256

The central idea behind *Iankey* is the avoidance of letter drills – "asdf asdf asdf ..." and the like – in favour of meaningful words. The passages to be copied are fairly long, and occupy three or four widely-spaced lines in the central screen area. Your efforts appear immediately underneath this text, word-wrapping so that each line of input fits directly under the corresponding line of the original. Mistakes are marked as they are typed in, different markings distinguishing the common sorts of typing error – transposition, substitution etc. *Iankey's* error recognition is very strong, though quite how useful this is I'm not sure. After all, most people can distinguish between different kinds of error for themselves – assuming they're interested in the first place.

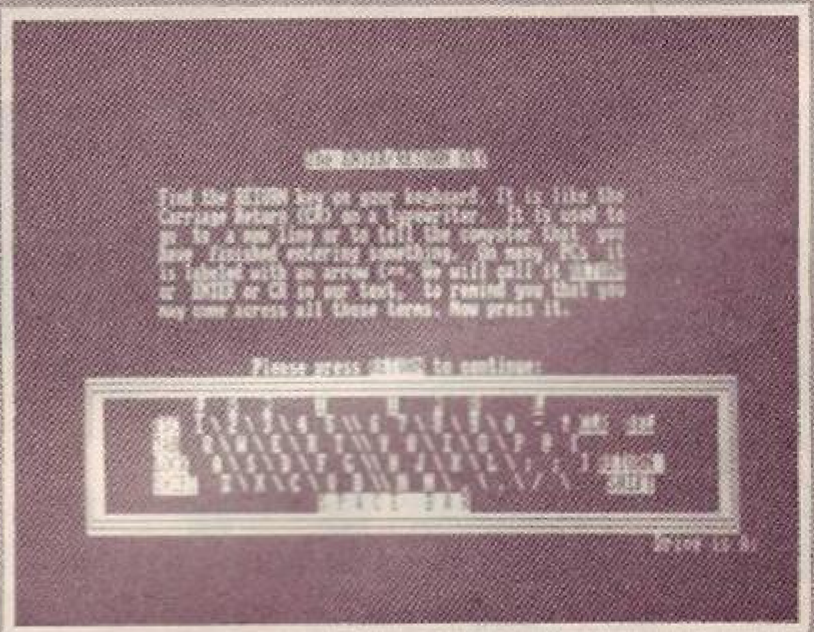
The statistics panel at the top of screen gives details of your typing speed and accuracy. Iansyst make a big fuss about the program giving you this data, continuously updated, while you're typing each exercise. Personally I found this at best unnecessary, and at worst a distraction – if you're concentrating on your typing, you probably won't have time to look at it. Still, it's there if you want it.

As for the bottom of the screen, that's occupied by a display of the keyboard, complete with a flashing cursor to indicate which key to hit next. It should be emphasised, this display does not replace the text to be copied – it simply acts as a guide to the key's position. The documentation stresses that you should only use it as such, but the temptation is there. If you want to avoid bad habits setting in early, you can switch the keyboard display off. Again, you can use it if you find it helpful, or ignore it if you don't.

The big problem with *Iankey* is its excess of on-screen instructions. Rather than moving you swiftly on from one test to the next, it treats you to a series of helpful little messages detailing its error-marking system and explaining typing posture etc. This, combined with the redraw time for the keyboard display and statistics panel, kills off such pace as it might otherwise have. To be fair, *Iankey* does place the emphasis on relaxing while learning, but all the waiting between tests can be extremely frustrating.

The general style of *Iankey* seems to be to bombard the user with information, not all of it particularly useful. This might be praiseworthy in an everyday applications program, but in a tutor it's rather undesirable. Your first impression may very well be that it is complex and confusing – the last thing you need, given the difficulty of the learning task itself.

A lot of this confusion could be removed by the use of a less cluttered display – there is a wholly inappropriate emphasis on decorating the screen which you pay for in both time and clarity.



G O O D N E W S

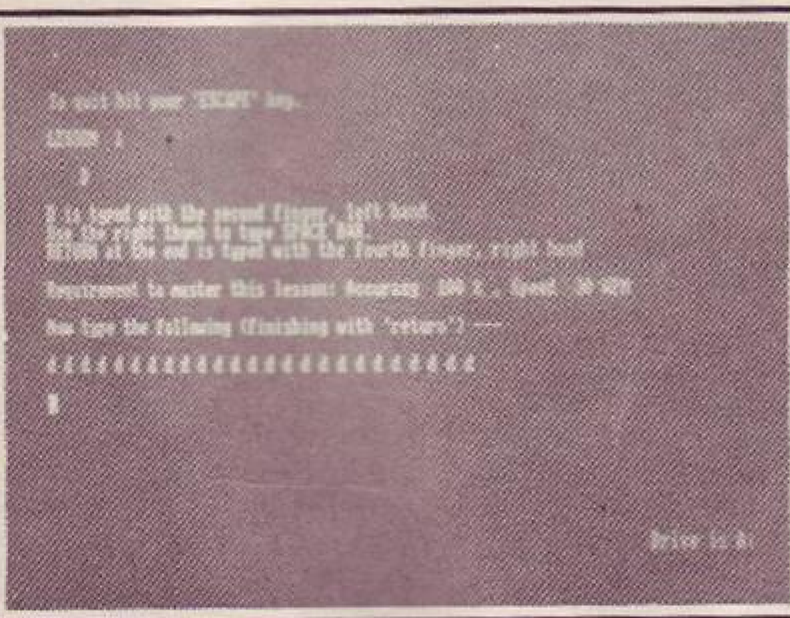
- ▶ **Takes things easy**
- ▶ **No letter drills**
- ▶ **Some slick features**
- ▶ **Lots of on-screen advice**

B A D N E W S

- ▶ Cluttered screen
- ▶ Slick features aren't all very useful
- ▶ Can get boring

TOUCH'N'GO
Caxton, £24.99 disk
CPC 6128, PCW 8256

There is nothing sophisticated about this one – the comparison with *Iankey* could hardly be more striking. *Touch'n'Go* simply gives you a line of text to copy, and the minimum level of speed and accuracy it expects. The lines of text consist of letter drills to familiarise you with the feel of the letter positions, and meaningful words as practice. The progress between the two is gradual . A few letter drills are used whenever new letters are introduced – these are followed by lines of repetitive words and finally by lines of varied words.



The power of this system comes from the way in which the letters are introduced a few at a time, and then thoroughly practised before moving on. This allows the program to set tough speed and accuracy requirements right from the word go. As a result the tests can be extremely demanding of effort and concentration – all of this a long way from the relaxed *Iankey* approach.

Documentation on *Touch'n'Go* is almost non-existent, but this shouldn't prove too much of a problem. The program tells you on-screen more or less all you need to know – you may need to check with your manual about making a working disk, though, if you're not too hot on CP/M.

The screen display is the bare minimum required for the job – it's so sparse it will behave itself perfectly well under CP/M v2.2 – and the prompts are none too chatty. As for the error checker it's none too intelligent, often counting two errors where most people – and *Iankey*, incidentally – would only count one. All of this makes it painfully clear that your £25 or so bought you nothing more than a set of sentences to copy, and a program to time and correct you. This is, give or take a few gimmicks, all that any typing tutor consists of – *Touch'n'Go* just doesn't bother trying to hide it. The error checker's little hiccups are rarely a problem, as many of the tests demand 100% accuracy anyway – it's adequate, and that's surely what counts.

G O O D N E W S

- ▶ Drives you hard
- ▶ Teaches you a few keys at a time
- ▶ Can get addictive, believe it or not

B A D N E W S

- ▶ Sudden jumps in speed required can throw you a bit
- ▶ Not much more to it than the bare essentials

The Verdict
With a typing tutor, the tests themselves are the main issue. For all *Iankey*'s sophistication – gimmickry might be a better word – or *Touch'n'Go*'s functional approach, it's really just a question of whose technique suits you best. *Iankey* is great if you're sick of letter drills, want to learn at your own speed and like a friendly approach. *Touch'n'Go* can put you under a lot of pressure, but the mixture of drills and normal text gets your speed up fast and keeps it there. As for the pressure, you may well find it helps hold your interest.

What's this? Yes, Gremlin Graphics have a new utilities label – Discovery. Andrew Wilton admires *Pyradev*, a suite of progrqms that give you a software developement system.

PYRADEV
Discovery, £29.95 disk
CPC 464, 664, 6128

If you want to be a machine-code wizard, it'll take more than a big book or two – you're going to need some utilities. With this new development package on Gremlin's Discovery label you can get all the tools for the job in one go.

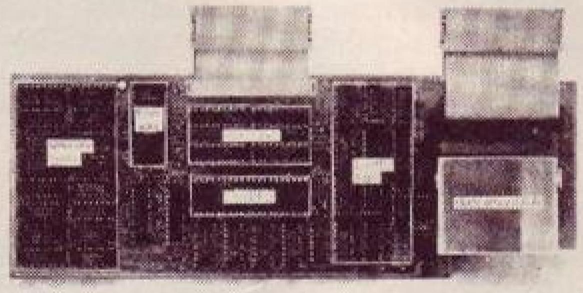
The system consists of five separate modules – editor, assembler, monitor, "Disk-Nurse" and file-manager – all accessed via a central menu. The last of these is a straightforward copy/delete/rename utility – this could come in handy, since *Pyradev* runs under AMSDOS rather than CP/M.

Editor
The full-screen editor, used to enter and edit source code, is probably the weakest of the main programs – it isn't particularly bad, but it does lack the thoroughness evident in the rest of the system. The problem is quite simple – all editing has to be done in overwrite, rather than the more normal insert, mode. If you accidentally omit a character the only solution is to insert a space using <shift><cursor-right>, and overwrite it with the appropriate character. While this isn't a serious problem, it is unnecessary and annoying – not least because it mars an otherwise impressive package. Indeed, the editor itself is fast and powerful in most respects, so it's an unfortunate omission all round.

Assembler
The assembler, on the other hand, has just about everything you could wish for – macros, conditional assembly, undocumented

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instructions, the lot. It runs at a healthy speed, even when it's outputting the source to screen. It can link enormous source files – up to 992K on a two-drive system – and write the resulting machine code to disk in AMSDOS or CP/M transient command format. The extra RAM of a 6128 or an expanded 64K machine is used to speed the assembly process up, by cutting down the need for disk access. There's really not much more an assembler could have – there's no parenthesis or operator precedence in its expression set, but that's about it.

Monitor/dissassembler

The monitor/disassembler is a similarly thorough piece of work. It's relocatable, and can be loaded in cut down form where space is at a premium. It can load test code from tape or disc, and has a good range of debugging aids – single and double stepping, register display and alteration, and up to five break points. Memory can be altered and searched, entry in each case being possible in either hex or ASCII. Search string entry is a bit unfriendly and the documentation fails to point out a couple of pitfalls – namely that the routine will quite cheerfully find its own copy of the search string, or worse still a copy in, e.g. screen memory, which it then destroys. These aren't really problems as such, but a warning in the user manual would avoid confusion.

Disassembler

This is straightforward, though lacking a few features that you might have found helpful – it won't follow jumps, for one thing. You can disassemble to your screen, printer or – very usefully – to a disc file. Automatic labelling with the latter makes editing and reassembly not only feasible but reasonably easy. Bank switching, block move and saving to tape/disc round off this impressive module.

Disk Nurse

Lastly, *Disk Nurse* allows you to inspect the contents of a disc, unerase files, search, modify and copy disc sectors directly – in short, it is a powerful utility, invaluable for the hackers and hands-on programmers among you.

The Verdict

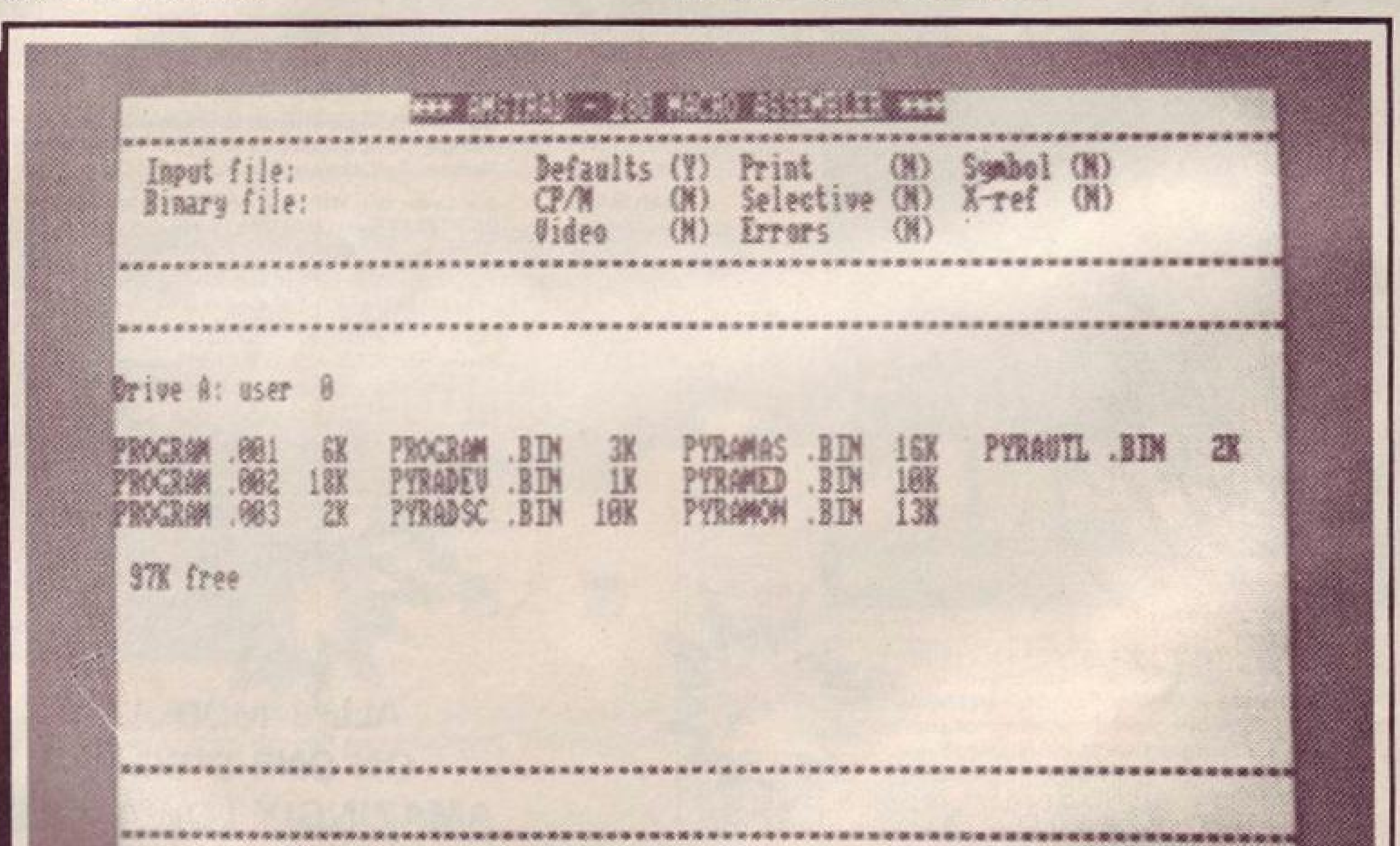
So, a strong package which should give you all the programming power you need. The price is very reasonable considering what you actually get – a complete development system – and bearing in mind the price of the Z80 manual and firmware guide you'll also need to buy. Beginners may find the documentation a little unhelpful, but this is nothing unusual – and in any case, Discovery have thoughtfully included three sample source files which double as self-teaching aids. Occasional errors aside, experienced users will find little to grumble about – technical points are covered quite well, and the monitor notes are particularly helpful.

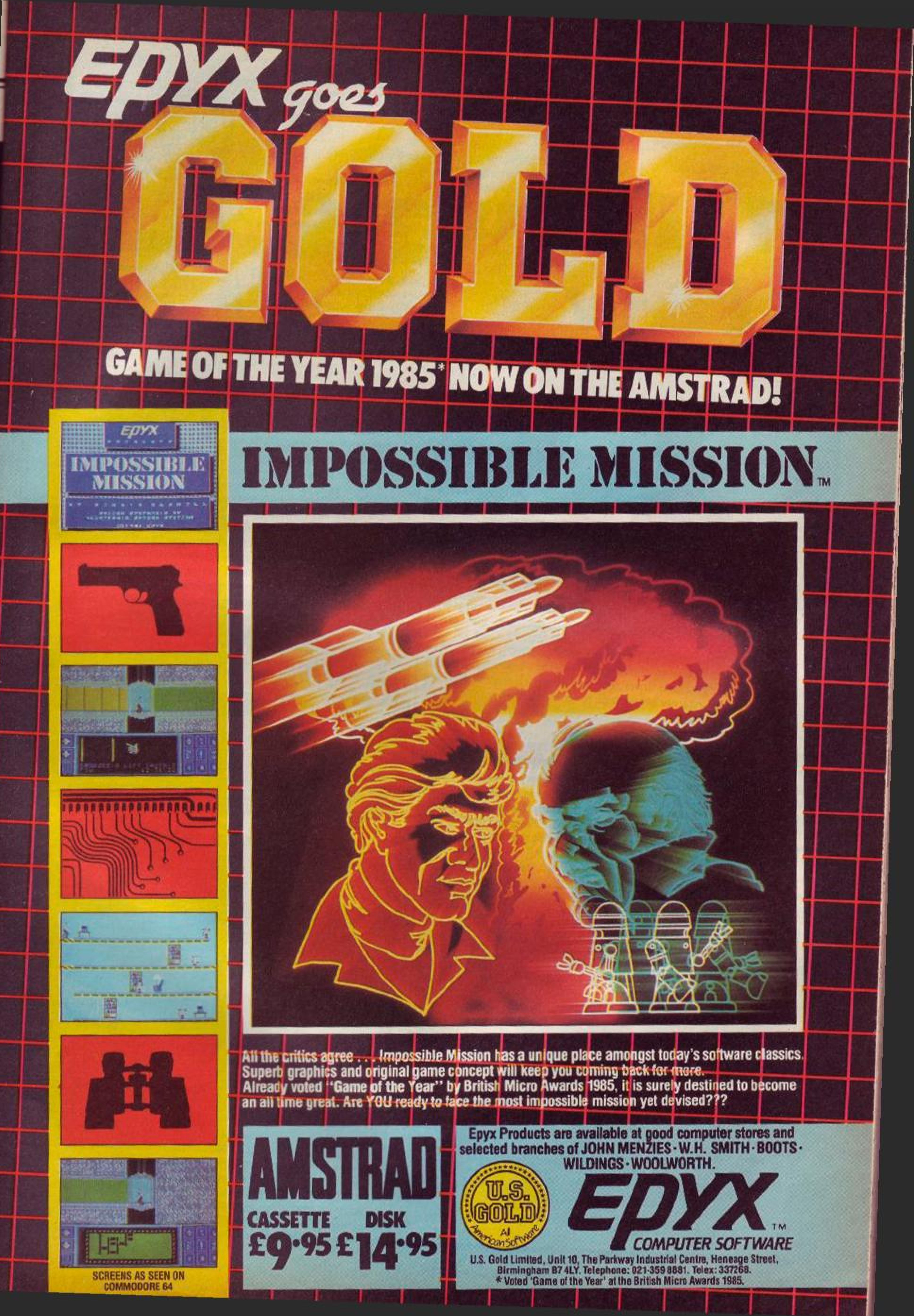
G O O D N E W S

- **Four big, powerful programs for under £30.**
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- **Good documentation and on-screen help.**

B A D N E W S

- **Disk only.**
- **Editor has no insert mode.**




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SCREENS AS SEEN ON COMMODORE 64



Melbourne Draw

Is Melbourne House's the art program that's really quick on the draw?

Andrew Wilton delves deep.

MELBOURNE DRAW
Melbourne House, £14.95, cass. only
CPC 464, 664, 6128

The program's loading screen is impressive, but then that doesn't tell you too much. You expect software houses to make an effort on art program loaders – to really stretch their package as far as it'll go. Oddly enough, Melbourne House haven't really done that here. *Melbourne Draw* is capable of some extraordinary things, but the only real indication of this at loading time is it's length – it takes nearly a quarter of an hour.

Once loading's finished, you find the usual blank screen with cursor. You can move this cursor with keys or joystick – the normal movement speed is quite slow, but using <ctrl> or <shift> will increase this. It's a shame that this method of control is the only one available. The choice of an "intelligent" cursor – one which moves faster the longer you hold the cursor key down – would have been nice, and would certainly have made joystick control a more useful option. Pressing the fire button or space bar paints the pixel under the cursor in the currently selected colour.

OPTIONS

Press the return key, and a line of options appears across the top of the screen. Selecting between these produces one of a series of pull-down menus, allowing you to change mode, alter the colour set, draw an ellipse and much more besides. The pull-down philosophy is carried right the way through, with a pop-up pallette for ink selection and small dialogue boxes to issue warnings. The latter appear whenever there's a risk of seriously damaging the current picture, and always give you the option of cancelling the relevant option.

The pull-downs offer most of the usual options – airbrush, rubber band, rubber box etc. – plus some unusual ones. You can set up a magnification window to give a clear view of individual pixels, for instance. Alternatively you could try the oddly named "Zap" function, which is used to change the colour of individual line segments. There are also a range of options to alter the front end – the way the program appears to the user.

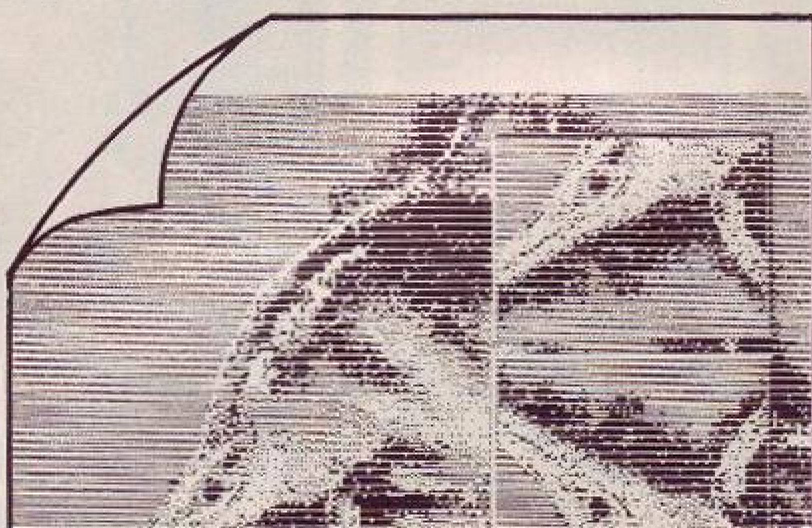
However, there seem to be some serious omissions – there's no paintbrush option, for instance, and no way to change the airbrush pattern. The fact is, you simply don't need them. *Melbourne Draw* has three pull-downs – "areas", "blocks" and "textures" – which give you, between them, all the drawing power you can handle.



The pull-downs are optional, but beginners will find them very useful.

AREAS

Areas need not be rectangular – you can define an area on the basis of its present colour, using the "Find Area" command. This works outwards from the pixel under the drawing cursor, noting all pixels of the same colour, until it reaches either the edge of the screen or a boundary of different coloured pixels. It paints the area as it goes, and then returns the pixels to their original colour afterwards. It does this at a fair pace, and having defined the area

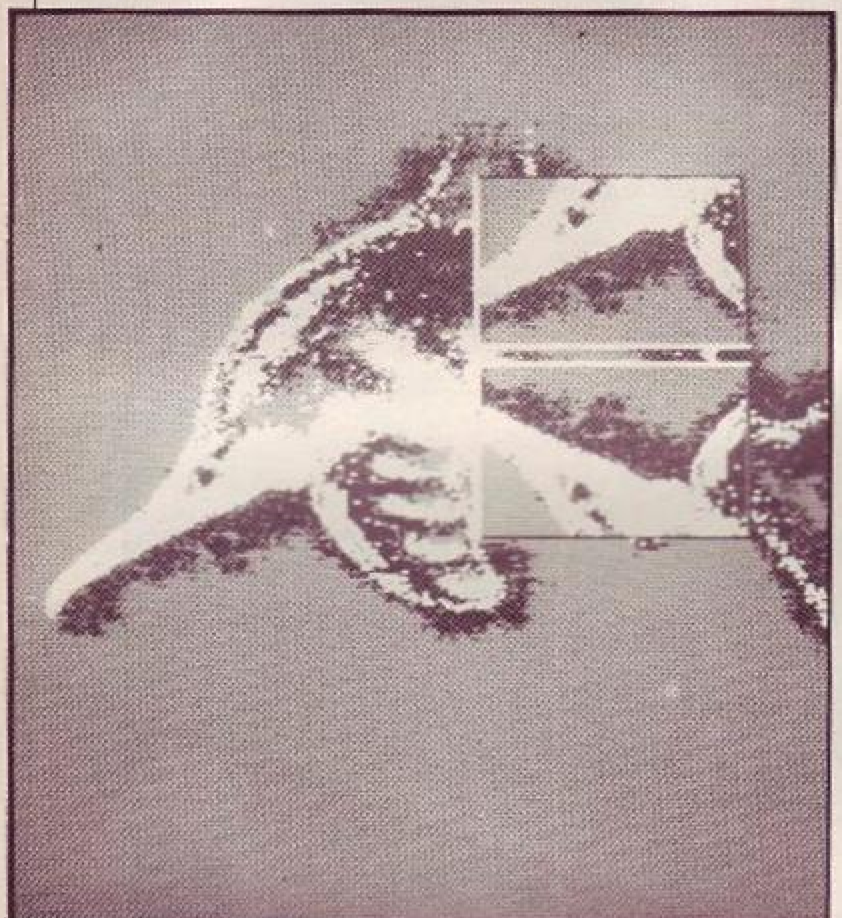


Finished pictures can be dumped to a printer.

can flood it with a given colour very quickly indeed. What's more, the fill is extremely thorough – it can, and will, escape from a gap one pixel wide, anywhere in the boundary. This would cause problems, were it not for the way filling is split into two stages. The temporary colour flood allows you to spot overspills at the defining stage, before you carry out any permanent filling operation.

BLOCKS

A block is simply a rectangular area of the screen. Creating a block is simplicity itself – you just select the function "Remember Block" from the Block pull-down, and then stretch a "rubber box" cursor around the chosen area. Having defined the block you can drag it to another position, copy it, mirror it or even turn it upside down. Thus, you can easily create symmetrical shapes, or re-arrange the composition of a picture if you want to.



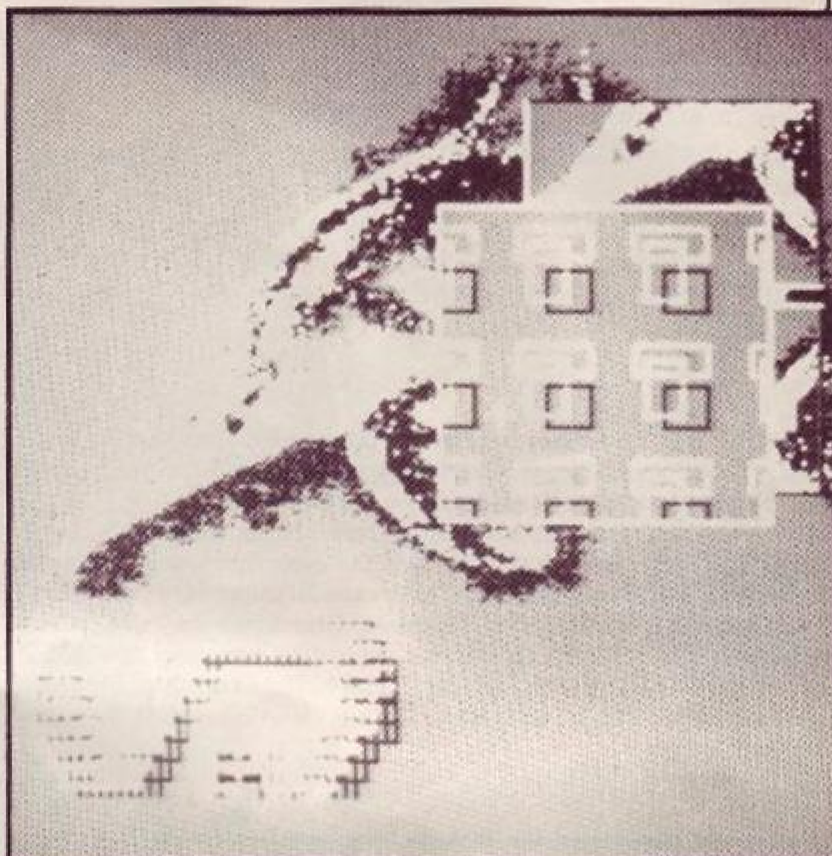
Blocks can easily be copied or repositioned.

Where most art programs have a fill command, *Melbourne Draw* has an entire pull-down for the purpose – the Areas menu. As with blocks, areas must be defined before they can be used. You can mark out any rectangular section of screen as an area – this is done, block-style, with a box-cursor. If you define your area thus, options include not only the expected colour fill but also colour merge and colour swap. These act almost like localised ink changes, forcing all pixels of one colour to another, or in the case of the colour swap forcing two sets of pixels to exchange colour.

TEXTURES

The most astonishing feature of *Melbourne Draw* is texturing. A texture, in the program's terms, is a section of screen – but not of the drawing screen. Rather, it is a section of a separate texture screen which can be switched in or out of the display without affecting the main drawing. To define a texture, simply switch the texture screen on – it overlays the lower half of the screen while it is in use – draw/spray whatever pattern or picture you want, and mark it with a box cursor. Now you can make copies of it on the main screen, just as you could with a block. More importantly, you can paint a trail of your chosen texture, just as if it were a brush. Textures can be multi-coloured, their backgrounds can be made transparent, and you can store up to 26 of them.

As if all this was not enough, you can combine these facilities to get even more striking effects. Texture fill is a very strong technique, allowing you to cover an area with patterned "wallpaper". Block copying can be used to transfer a pattern to the texture screen, and block mirror to create symmetrical textures. You can even build up large textures using smaller ones – it's entirely up to you.



Textures can be used as airbrush patterns, or to "wallpaper" an area.

MEMORY

You might reasonably wonder how all of this can be squeezed intc a 464. It's not just the program itself – there's the texture screen, the pull-down storage, the area definitions and the magnification window all needing space allocated to them. The truth is, at full stretch *Melbourne Draw* can run out of memory. Pull-downs in particular can wipe out previously stored data – but never without warning you first. What's more, the warning is genuinely useful. Rather than using pull-downs, you can select every possible command by a short – typically two-character – keyboard sequence. After you've used the package with pull-downs for a while, you may well find keyboard entry quicker and easier. What comes as a pleasant surprise is that *Melbourne Draw* gives you the choice.

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **Powerful and sophisticated art package.**
- ▶ **Good documentation.**
- ▶ **Nice price.**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **Cassette only.**

The Verdict

This package really is something special. It offers you enormous power and flexibility, for a very reasonable price – and it doesn't even need a lightpen, let alone a mouse. The performance it wrings out of 64k and a cassette drive is just phenomenal.

Serious Software

Bertram Carrot investigates a package that provides you with a suite of business programs.

PERSONAL ASSISTANT

FMP Business Software, £149.95
CPC 6128, PCW 8256

Personal Assistant sets out to provide you with a suite of useful business programs: a word processor, database, desk diary, invoice processor, label printer and bank account manager. It tries to do this under CP/M Plus on the CPC 6128 or PCW 8256. Unfortunately, for several reasons, it falls short of the mark.

THE MANUAL

This is the first and main reason the package doesn't really succeed. The A5 booklet covers all six applications in 50 pages, which is not really enough, as some sections are skimped.

The manual appears not to have been proof read at all. Spelling and printing errors abound and the descriptions of prompts and screen displays often bear little resemblance to the real thing. For instance, the section on *Datamate* (the database) describes how you finish defining a field on a record by pressing 'the HALF key (the key next to the break key)'. The 6128 has neither a 1/2 nor a break key, and Joyce keeps her 1/2 key next to her SHIFT (modest thing).


Warton Toadfarms Ltd
SUMMARY

TODAY'S DATE 03/16/86

INV DATE ACC NO. INV NO. CLIENTS NAME INV.TOT.

14/03/86 123-45 1 AMALGAMATED TOADSPAWN INC 6.77

SUMMARY TOTAL= £ 6.77

TOAD PEDIGREE NAME: LIMBURGER GRAND FLYSNAPPER
TOAD COMMON NAME: LUMPY
AGE: 4.25
SEX (STAG/DOE): STAG
STAG: CHAMPION LIMBURGER TONGUEROLL
DOE: DAME LIPSMACK FLYSNAPPER
GRANDSTAG: CHAMPION THUNDERTHIGHS
GRANDDOE: DAME SLUGLEAP OF TWITTERING
LITTERS: 4
MEDICAL HISTORY: STRONG, WELL-SHAPED TOAD WITH FAULTLESS PEDIGREE

BILLMATE

This program prepares invoices and statements to send to your customers. As you enter the quantity and price of each item on an invoice, *Billmate* works out the VAT amount and the running total. When you've finished entering data, which you can't edit within the 'Add invoice' routine, you can store the invoice on disc.
You can print invoices individually or as a batch. The program will also summarise the invoices sent out between two specified dates.

Billmate asks for the current date before you start to use the program. *Personal Assistant* seems to have trouble with dates. The review programs treat February as an error (though this has since been fixed) and can't decide on the correct date format. Some of them like DD/MM/YY, while others will only accept MM/DD/YY. Fair enough, then, consult the manual to find out which is needed for *Billmate* – 'Enter the correct date in the form:- 00/00/00'. Ah.

BANKMATE

This program is a convenient way of storing your personal bank account (or company account, if the company's small). It allows you to enter each amount spent and earnt and will keep a current balance for you.

Bankmate seems to work pretty well, but as with any program of this type, it's only as useful as you are diligent in keeping it up to date.

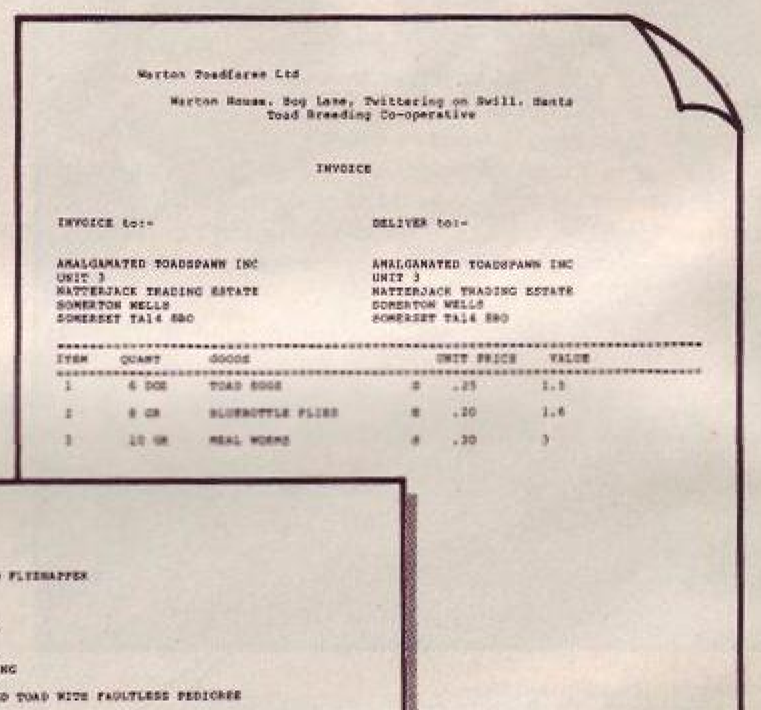
APPOINTMATE

If you use a desk diary to make a note of your appointments, then you may find *Appointmate* a helpful alternative. It stores details of up to 930(!) appointments and can display the data in several ways.

You can look at any given appointment, and also check a particular time to see if you're free. You can display all your appointments on a given day or between any two dates. All very useful you might think, and so it is – except for one oddity.

Each appointment entered into *Appointmate* has to include the birthdate of the visitor! You can't press <RETURN> to bypass the offending field but have to enter a valid date (too bad if he/she was born in February!). How many times do you know the birthdate of a visitor. Why should you want to? *Appointmate* doesn't actually **use** the information, but won't continue without it.

Oh, you have to enter the date here as well. Which format? The manual says 'in the form:- 04/04/85'.


Warton Toadfarms Ltd

Warton House, Bog Lane, Twittering on Swill, Hants
Toad Breeding Co-operative

INVOICE

INVOICE to:-
AMALGAMATED TOADSPAWN INC
UNIT 3
NATTERJACK TRADING ESTATE
SOMERTON WELLS
SOMERSET TA14 8BO

DELIVER to:-
AMALGAMATED TOADSPAWN INC
UNIT 3
NATTERJACK TRADING ESTATE
SOMERTON WELLS
SOMERSET TA14 8BO

ITEM	QUANT	GOODS	UNIT PRICE	VALUE
1	6 DOZ	TOAD EGGS	@ .25	1.5
2	8 GR	BLUEBOTTLE FLIES	@ .20	1.6
3	10 GR	MEAL WORMS	@ .30	3

TOTAL 6.1

INVOICE TOTAL 6.77

Invoice Date 14/03/86 Invoice No. 1 Account No. 123-45 E.& O.E.

DATAMATE

This is the database program, and is quite sophisticated. A record is designed by typing field names directly onto a screen 'card', and the length of each field is defined by the number of spaces after its name. You can store about 600 records of 300 characters on a single disc side.

Once you've defined your record and entered data onto it, you can find any record on the file using one of three search routines. *Datamate* can match on any or ALL fields in a search. This means you could, for instance, search a name and address file for all people called Smith who live in Manchester and are not on the phone. The first field on each record is assumed to be a 'key' field, and searching by this field is faster than by any of the others.

You can also sort the records by any field and make calculations between them. You could have a product file with a VAT exclusive price in one field, the VAT rate in another, and the calculated total in a third. Totals can also be carried from one



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record to another.

Datamate can print out single records, which may be more than one screenful, or the whole file, via extra 'formats' which can be defined and stored separately. This technique allows all kinds of lists and reports to be produced from your files. You can also merge *Wordmate* text with your datafile to print forms or circulars. Default printer settings are for a Tatung TP100 printer (a what?).

MAILMATE

This is a fairly basic program to handle mailing lists. You can enter, view, search, sort, and print lists of names and addresses, or sets of labels.

WORDMATE

Personal Assistant's Word Processor is not up to the standard of *Wordstar*, nor *Tasword*. It is quite sufficient for typing letters, but not really up to long reports, written quotations or magazine articles.

Basic formatting is provided by wordwrap and right-hand justification, although the manual seems unsure about what it's offering; 'Wordwrap is a special function which prevents words that are too long to fit on the line to be 'Wrapped' to the next line automatically'(?).

Deletion of text is fast and easy, but insertion follows the *Tasword* technique of splitting the line, inserting text and then reformatting.

Blocks of text may be defined, and then moved, copied or deleted in one operation. Text may be searched for given words, and replaced by others if required. Margins can be set and the text broken into pages at any point, or automatically after a set number of lines.

Wordmate doesn't support repeated headers or footers, page numbering or double spacing, but can be made to use some printer effects, such as emphasised or condensed print.

NEW VERSION

It's only fair to mention that FMP have released a modified version of *Personal Assistant* in the month since they sent this copy for review. They claim to have made 'minor adjustments'. There wasn't time to check this new version, but some of the problems found in this copy, which was **not** a pre-release version, may have been removed.

G O O D N E W S

- ► **Six business applications in one package.**
- ► **Database and Word processor are reasonable programs.**

B A D N E W S

- ► **Very poor manual.**
- ► **No demonstration files.**
- ► **Few error messages.**
- ► **Little error trapping.**

VERDICT

Buy *Mini Office II* instead. It's a lot cheaper, and much easier to use. Although it doesn't offer equivalents for *Bankmate Billmate* or *Appointmate*, you should have enough money left over to shop around.

CAR CURE

Simtron £9.95 cass, £13.95 disk
CPC 464, 664, 6128

If you're always having problems with your car, and don't know where to start looking for the underlying faults, you might think a car fault-finding program is just what you need. In that case, *Car Cure* seems to have the market all to itself at the moment.

While loading, the program produces a maze on screen for you to solve – a different one every time. This is all very interesting, but not too helpful on the automotive front. Once you've tired of the maze, you can get on with the slightly more important business of fixing your car.

You can track down the fault by its symptoms, or by the parts you suspect of causing it. Normally, you start off by finding the general area of problem – braking, ignition etc. – on the main symptom menu. You can now call up a more detailed sub-menu to specify the symptom more precisely – sudden loss of braking power, for example, or brakes pulling to one side. This will now lead to a parts menu, giving general areas where the problem might be, and thence to a menu of specific faults which could be behind it all.



At this point, you have to leave Arnold, go out to the car and check each of the possible fault areas – this would be rather easier if *Car Cure* had a print-out facility. Then, as you eliminate each possibility you can trudge back in and cross it off the menu. Once you've finally found the fault *Car Cure* will tell you what action needs to be taken, and how easy/safe it is for you to fix yourself.

This is quite useful I suppose, but nothing that a good book on the subject couldn't do for you at least half as well. Where a computer program of this sort should win out, *Car Cure* doesn't. It's not an expert system – it can't ask you questions about the symptoms, or come to a diagnosis of its own. Nor is it a proper database – you can't cross-reference two symptoms to see what single problem could account for both. It's a shame really, because obviously a lot of effort has gone into the data for the program. You just can't get at it the way you need to.

G O O D N E W S

- ► **Lots of information.**
- ► **Safety warnings wherever necessary.**

B A D N E W S

- ► **No cross referencing.**

New word processor

Chris Anderson taps away at *NewWord*. Is it a serious rival to *WordStar's* supremacy?

NEW-WORD
New Star Software, £69 disk
CPC 6128, PCW 8256

If Amsoft had released this program they'd undoubtedly have called it *Wordstar Plus*. That's what it is. *Wordstar* plus a few embellishments. Probably wouldn't attract much attention were it not for its price. On any other computer *Wordstar* plus spelling checker plus mailmerge costs several hundred pounds, and even on the Amstrad *Pocket Wordstar* will cost you over £100. So *NewWord* is certainly a bargain substitute.

It's greatest appeal will be for people who are familiar with *Wordstar* and want to run a similar program on their Amstrad. Such people will immediately find themselves at home with *NewWord*. At least 90% of the commands are identical. Text is entered and edited in almost exactly the same way and files from the two programs are interchangeable.

The main difference between the two programs is in user-friendliness. The authors of *NewWord* have tried hard to eliminate *Wordstar's* ambiguous prompts and have also revamped the range of 'help' menus. This, coupled with a good (and very large) manual, means that a newcomer should be able to get to grips with the program a good deal quicker than with *Wordstar*. However it retains *Wordstar's* initially confusing system of multi-key commands – this, plus the sheer size and complexity of the program, means that if ease of learning is a high priority, you might well do better to look at a simpler (and cheaper!) word-processor such as *Tasword* or *Protext*.

The other main improvements are as follows:

▶ Text which you set as bold or underlined is high-lighted on screen in inverse video. This is a valuable addition if you use these functions regularly because without it you can easily forget to 'toggle off' these commands and so print out a document which is underlined throughout.

▶ There is an 'unerase' facility. If you accidentally delete a word or a line this will restore it. You can even use the facility as a fast way of moving a line from one location to another.

▶ You don't have *Pocket Wordstar's* annoying restriction which limits the size of blocks that can be moved or copied to just 30 words or so.

▶ The search and replace function is even more powerful than *Wordstar's*. In particular you have the option of replacing all occurrences of a phrase from the current cursor position[*******] as well as all the other choices. Also you can look for the end of a paragraph (hard-return) – often very useful.

▶ The print routines are more powerful, flexible and understandable and it's considerably easier to customise the program for your own printer.

▶ There are special commands which allow you mark out individual COLUMNS of data in a document. These can then be moved or copied. Very useful if you regularly produce tables.

▶ The mailmerge section of the program includes a facility for conditional printing. For example, you could send out a circular letter including a paragraph which would only be printed for people living in Scotland.

▶ The Amstrad version of the program comes ready installed so that the cursor keys and each of the function keys can be used as a shorthand for some of the more common commands. This can be done with *Wordstar*, but you need to know how!

Are there any disadvantages? Yes, one important one for 6128 owners who don't have an extra disk-drive. The various elements of *NewWord* take up an awful lot of space. The maximum amount of space for your documents you can get on a working disk is 57K – less than a third of the total. With *Wordstar*, once you're familiar with it, you can delete the help-messages file and give yourself double this space. *NewWord* won't allow you to do this. If you write so much that you need a word-processor as good as this, you'll have to fork out for the second drive. PCW 8256 owners don't have this problem as they can simply run *NewWord* from their built-in RAM disk drive (drive M) and use drive A for storing documents.

The lack of a second drive is an even greater handicap when it comes to using the EXCELLENT spelling checker program that's included in the package. It can just about be used with a single drive, but you have to constantly swap disks. The checker has a built in dictionary with a remarkable 45,000 words! It's fast and powerful, offering numerous options including the ability to suggest correct spellings for words you're unsure of!

People disagree about the value of spelling checkers, but if you think you could use one, be assured this one is state of the art.

GOOD NEWS

▶ **Compatible with *Wordstar* but far less money.**
▶ **Large range of help screens with emphasis on user-friendliness.**
▶ **Numerous improvements including bold highlighting, unerase and large block movements.**
▶ **Mail-merge section including conditional print commands.**
▶ **Superb spelling checker with 45,000 word dictionary.**

BAD NEWS

▶ **Not really suitable for single-disk drive use on 6128.**
▶ **Parts of the program, eg. 'dot commands', still very difficult to use.**

VERDICT
NewWord should have enormous appeal for two different sets of people: 6128 owners who can afford a second disk drive, and 8256 owners who want to go beyond *LocoScript*. So long as they are familiar with *Wordstar* or are prepared to spend time getting to grips with a powerful program, this package is unbeatable.

MASTER

Bob Wade visits the big software

Every Amstrad title that Mastertronic have ever released, starting with *Chiller*, has entered the top ten of the charts. Many of them are still there. This amazing record shows no sign of letting up, with games like *Spellbound* taking the market by storm and a whole host of other titles on the way. Many are conversions – but none the worse for that – while original titles are also in the pipeline, notably the programs from Stephen Curtis. One cold February day in London, Bob Wade was allowed to cast his peepers over the work in progress.



Just one of the vast number of screens in *Graceful Degradation*

Graceful Degradation?

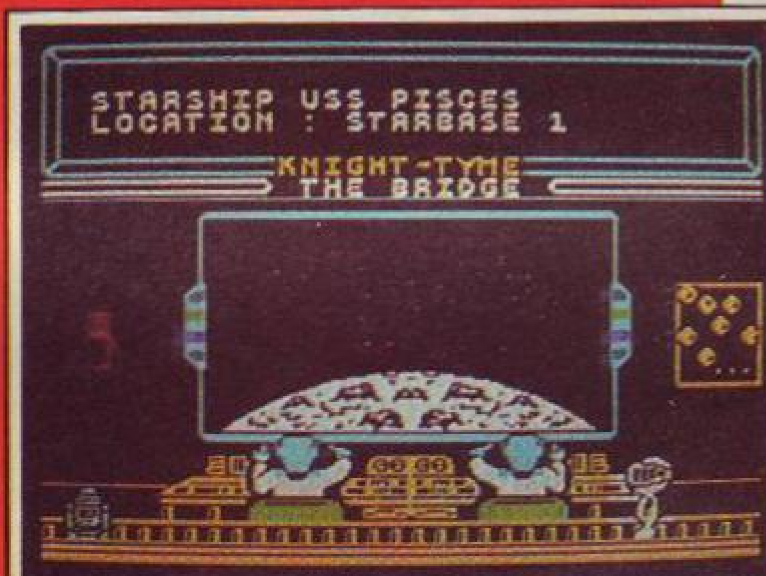
This is the latest game from Stephen Curtis. Originally titled *The Human Harvest*, it has still not been definitely named for its release. It's the third in the *Nonterraqueous* series but is a completely different game to the previous two, only the scenarios being connected.

The game will consist of 4 galaxies containing 42 planets, each galaxy having 2,436 screens. A grand and staggering total of 9,744 screens in all. It picks up where *Soul of a Robot* left off with the master computer destroyed. Unfortunately this has the side effect of driving all the robots and droids completely crazy and keen to kill anything that moves.

To escape the robots you have to find a sanctuary planet, but that will be no mean feat – the droids all kill on contact, putting tremendous pressure on your limited lives. It isn't just an exploration challenge, though, since there are many more puzzles than in the previous two games. These take the same basic form as before with certain objects opening up new areas of play. However, the increased numbers should make things much more difficult and challenging.

The planets all have a different background to the screen and there are plenty of the colourful graphics which are a hallmark Stephen's games. On many screens there are flying saucers and these are the way in which you travel between planets.

It's certainly going to be the biggest game yet in the series but we'll have to wait for the finished version to tell what the gameplay is going to be like. At £1.99, though, you're getting each screen for 0.02 of a penny.

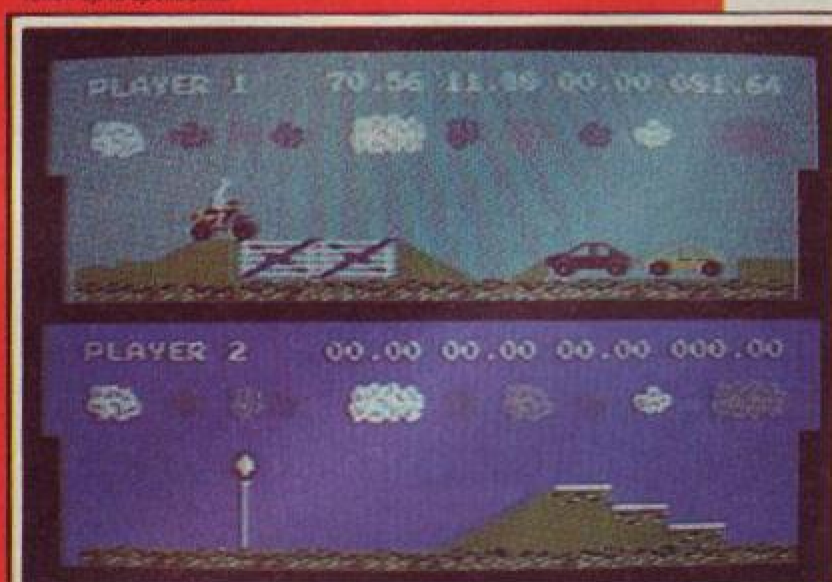


A Spectrum screen shot of *Knight Tyme*, the follow up to *Spellbound*

Knight Tyme

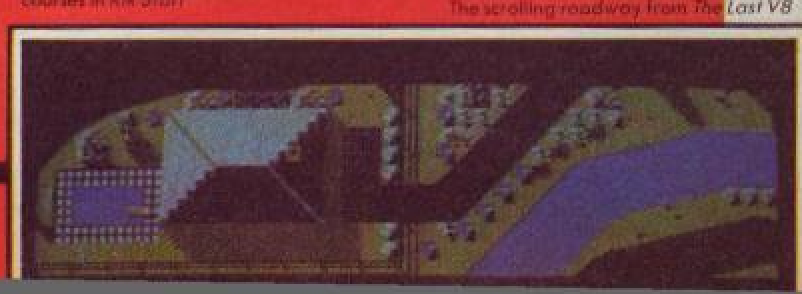
You can probably guess that this is another game starring David Jones's hero from the past, Magic Knight. It's yet another "threequel" but once again takes a good product and makes it even better. At the end of the excellent *Spellbound* Magic Knight casts a spell that puts him into this latest mess from which he has to extricate himself. The version we saw was running on the Spectrum but on the past evidence of *Spellbound* and *Finders Keepers* there won't be much difference.

Our hero finds himself in the transporter room of the USS Pisces with a deep longing to get back to his land of magic, castles, princesses, swords and armour. To get there he's going to have to make his way through one of the prettiest, most devious, complicated and



A Commodore 64 screen shot of the testing courses in *Kik Start*

The scrolling roadway from *The Last V8*



Special

TRONIC

house with little prices and discovers some exciting plans for the Amstrad.

imaginative arcade adventures (with the stress on the adventure) that you've ever seen.

At first sight it will remind you of *Spellbound*, with window menus, multi-character control and similar tasks. As you start discovering more about the game though the improvements and added details soon become apparent. There are more window menus than before with a wealth of commands, information, humourous comments and instructions at your disposal.

There are more characters for you to communicate with and control, and their individuality and use is again more complicated than before. Droids, aliens and humans may, or may not, help out – how they behave depends on how you treat them.

There are plenty of special features introduced that once again add whole new dimensions to the game. The USS Pisces can move about between planets – there are certainly plenty of them – and as well as hopping between them MK can teleport down onto them. Here there are lots of things to do with objects to collect and devious puzzles to solve.

The adventure element is of course the most important part of the game and it could well take months to solve. We rated *Spellbound* highly but this could be a real mind blower.

The Last V8

This changes the mood entirely, getting away from the arcade adventure and exploration challenges and into a good old fashioned arcade skills challenge. It's set in the future where the planet surface has become a radioactive wasteland. You survived in a government bunker and have been turning your car into a radiation-shielded, computerised, turbo-charged, eight cylinder mega car. While up on the surface a delayed nuclear warhead puts you under threat and you have to get back to the bunker before the shielding decays and you go up like so much chicken in a microwave.

The screen is split into two with a scrolling roadway on the top and a detailed instrument panel below. The panel gives all the relevant information on speed, shielding, time left etc but the real action goes on on the road.

The car accelerates in the direction of movement, or turns and accelerates if you're trying to change direction. This control is difficult to pick up and will lead to plenty of early crashes but perseverance will get you motoring. The roadway scrolls as the car moves along it and twists and turns like a tough rally course. It travels through picturesque and futuristic scenes on its way home but you'll have no time to admire the scenery as you panic to escape your approaching doom.

As an arcade challenge it will be extremely testing and require lots of practice to get good at but, like *Knight Tyme*, it will make a worthy addition to the MAD range of games at £2.99.

Kik Start

This is another game calling for quick reactions and very skilful joystick handling. It's based on the motorbike events where competitors have to negotiate many varied obstacles as fast as possible without falling off their machines.

One of the major attractions about the game is that itstwo player option has a split screen display allowing highly competitive action as both players battle simultaneously. There are several courses along which competitors have to travel and these are each several screens in length. As the bikes travel along, their half of the screen scrolls at the same pace,revealing the obstacles ahead.

The obstacles are extremely varied and include ramps, steps, barrels, gates, tyres, cars, rough ground, water and a host of other things. The skill to negotiating these is in controlling the speed and position of the bike. Some obstacles have to be leaped over at speed with extra impetus given by the fire button while others have to be crawled over slowly. The bike can perform wheelies, which is particularly handy for many problems – but one mistake anywhere and you're off.

Falling off costs a lot of time since it may be some way before you can rejoin the course. You can play each course as a challenge against the clock or as a hectic two player run, the latter of which can be very exciting as two bikes battle neck and neck. Three courses can be tackled in a row and the best total times for three courses will go on a high score table.

Some courses are easier than others but all of them require good timing, sharp reactions and a fair amount of practice. This will again be another marvellous addition to Mastertronic's range; it goes without saying it will be a snip at the price.

The Mastertronic Team



Colin Johnson, Alison Beesley (who organised the whole day), Jon Young and David Jones snapped in the plush Mastertronic offices

You know Mastertronic are doing well when you try to talk to the managing director Martin Alper. To contact him these days you'll have to phone the US because their operation over there is taking off so well that he's going to live there to handle it. You will also only hear good things about them from their programmers and these days you would be hard pressed to find an Amstrad owner who isn't satisfied with a Mastertronic title they've bought.

This sort of success once led to overconfidence and disasters in the software industry but at Mastertronic there's no sign of that happening because the business is run by businessmen and the

games conceived, written and converted by programmers who know what they're doing and aren't trying to run a company at the same time.

Alan Sharam is the company's Sales Director and attributes much of Mastertronic's success on the Amstrad to the fact that the company have "grown up" with the machines. Many people have all the titles and continue to collect the whole range, waiting for each new release much as Spectrum owners used to wait for the Ultimate titles.

He stresses the importance of producing good quality products and of having a loyal programming team. They manage that by being on extremely good terms with their programmers who are given plenty of individual freedom in what they produce, are well paid and receive royalty payments within 6-8 weeks of the game hitting the streets.

Colin Johnson, Marketing Manager, also had some opinions on why Mastertronic were doing so well. For a 13-14 year-old buying a £9.95 game is a special event and often it isn't worth the wait. However, you can buy five Mastertronic titles for that money and get more enjoyment even if there are a couple you don't like.

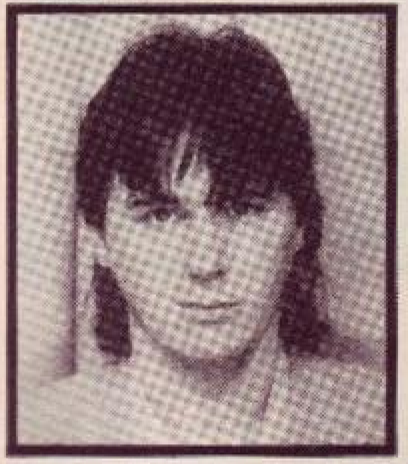
Jon Young, the Technical Director, told me about the programming "team" that work for the company and showed me around the development area where all the hardware is. It isn't a team in the traditional sense of the word because each author does most of his work individually. The teamwork comes in when a product needs extra work or development. The company are keen to cultivate any promising new talent they can find, to the extent of the existing programmers helping out a newcomer with a problem. There are also occasional meetings when a group of them will assemble and spend happy hours bouncing ideas around.

The overwhelming impression of Mastertronic is that everyone is doing what they should be doing. That might sound silly but too many companies have come to grief by not knowing how to run the business or how to produce good software – Mastertronic know how to do both.

Stephen Curtis

Stephen Curtis is the 23-year-old whizz-kid who brought you *Nonterraqueous* and *Soul of a Robot*. He's currently working on *Graceful Degradation*, which will be the third in the planned 21 game series.

Stephen's first game was catchily entitled *Hummer House of Horror* and was released in late 1983. Unfortunately the company producing it went bust a week later. No connection has been established between the two ev-



ents. His first real success was *Morris meets the Bikers* for Automata but it wasn't until he converted *Nonterraqueous* to the Amstrad that he was hooked by the Amstrad's capabilities. Both *Soul of a Robot* and *Graceful Degradation* have been developed, and will be released, first on the Amstrad.

Stephen programs using Hisoft's CP/M assembler and editor and plans to keep developing material on the Amstrad first. He takes great care over his game titles, which are always imaginative and descriptive. His storylines are also an event of some interest – they mostly come to him in the bath.

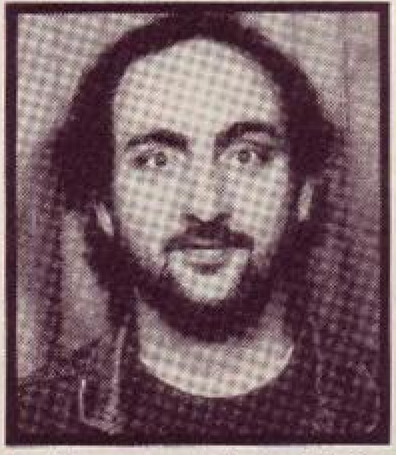
As well as programming Stephen is now a technical advisor at Mastertronic so they should have a long and happy association. Outside of computing Stephen lists his interests as being wine, women and his 3 litre Capri – but not all at the same time, we trust.

David Jones

It's not difficult to listen to David Jones talk about his games because he never stops. At times even breathing seems like a needless interruption to the flow of ideas and enthusiasm. That sort of single-minded dedication has led the 26-year-old north Londoner to develop ever better games.

His introduction to computing was via a Video Genie in 1980 but he soon moved to a Tandy model 3 which he still uses for development work. His first game was a little number called *Bonkers* but his rise to fame was heralded by the appearance of Magic Knight in *Finders Keepers*. This was the first to be converted to the Amstrad and has appeared in the charts consistently since its release.

Magic Knight continued his adventures in the magnificent *Spellbound* and now is set to do even better in *Knight Tyme*. Magic Knight probably has a following bigger even than that of the Wally family but David feels his alter ego has become too nice

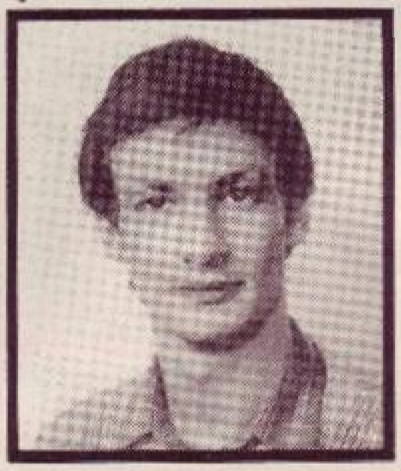


for his own good. In *Finders Keepers* he was stealing treasure but in *Spellbound* he's actually helping other people out. In *Knight Tyme* he starts feeling sorry for himself though and by the time his next escapade is finished he may have taken on a darker character altogether.

I could have listened to David talk about games past, present and future all day – and very nearly did do. He has an endless stream of ideas and information, all of which go into his games. The effort and imagination he puts in show in the quality of his games. If he keeps on improving at the rate he's been going Magic Knight may become more famous (infamous?) than *Space Invaders*.

Ed Hickman

Ed Hickman is the King of the Conversions as far as Amstrad games are concerned. His credit list includes *Finders Keepers, Spellbound, Chiller, One Man*



and his Droid and *Formula One Simulator*. Ed is a 26-year-old Yorkshireman who started programming on a Spectrum but got an Amstrad when they first came out and has been producing good stuff on it ever since.

Ed is currently working on *The Last V8* and *Kik Start* and by the time you read this he'll probably be onto *Knight Tyme*. He's a very fast worker who actually prefers doing conversion work – as long as he keeps producing the high quality we're used to nobody will mind that.

Future releases

Apart from the four games we've told you about in detail there are also plans to convert a whole host of other titles to the Amstrad. The only question is when there will be enough time and programmers available to cope with them. The programmer shortage was reflected by Mastertronic placing an add in *Popular Computing Weekly* in February, so if there are any budding Ed Hickman's or Stephen Curtis's out there, Mastertronic have got an awful lot of work to put somebody's way.

The other prospective games are:

► *Action Biker*, the joint promotion with KP Skips starring their hero Clumsy Colin

► *Hero of the Golden Talisman*, an arcade adventure in search of the five parts of the Golden Talisman



► *The Incredible Shrinking Firemen*, about a fireman trying to return to normal size in his nightmarish fire station

► *Space Hunter*, a 3D space simulation

► *Five-a-side*, the football game already released by Anirog on other machines.

THE ALL-ACTION REVIEWING SYSTEM

ACTION TEST

There's been something of a shortage of software this month, but that hasn't stopped us coming up with a really intriguing Mastergame. *Rasputin* has got everything it takes to become one of those games you just can't stop playing, even though you suspect you m,ight never crack it.

***Strike Force Harrier* and *Tau Ceti* are a couple of really excellent programs too – state-of-the-art in their respective moulds.**

We've managed to get previews of some very exciting games, though, and we hope to reviews of all of these in the next month or two.

With our new members of staff we've been able to make even more improvements to our reviewing system – now there's the added authority of a Third Opinion *and* a Green Screen View for those who don't have colour monitors. It all goes to show that there's no finer reviewing system than Amstrad Action's.

1. EXPERT GAMEPLAY. No game gets written up until it's had a long and thorough test. Take software editor Bob Wade. Despite his tender years (not to mention sore trigger finger), he's pretty deadly with a joystick and happens to have played virtually every Amstrad game ever released. As they say down these parts, BW reaches the parts other reviewers can't touch.

2. EXTRA OPINIONS. It's always dangerous to rely on just one reviewer – tastes vary enormously. So all the games we review now get looked at by THREE people. As well as more variety in the comments, it means we now have even more reliable ratings.

3. LABELLED SCREEN SHOTS. It's obviously important to print screen-shots but often they can be hard to make sense of. Labelling the different elements can make all the difference (even though the art department kick up an incredible fuss about the extra work – oh, they do.)

4. CLEAR SUMMARIES. Ever read a review where you ended up pretty unsure of the reviewer's overall opinion? To make our own views absolutely clear we include a concise summary of them under the Good news/Bad news headings.

5. RATINGS BOXES. We rate our games using percentages for extra flexibility and precision. And with so many games to work through, it's a help to be able to see at a glance which are good and which aren't. Our ratings boxes do this – just look out for those featuring long bars with dark tips!

6. GREEN SCREEN VIEW. Some people have to make do with a green screen monitor for their games. Our Green Screen View lets them know if they're worth the effort of loading.

AA Ratings – how they work

We've come up with five different headings which, we reckon, cover all that's important about a game. The most important is the final one which represents our overall assessment of it. Games which score 80% or higher earn the much sought after label of AA RAVE, while the highest rated game in any month becomes our MASTERGAME – we go through agonies before selecting that one.

The ratings categories are meant to be fairly self-explanatory, but that wasn't why we didn't print anything about them last issue – we just ran out of space! So here are the missing explanations. Hopefully you'll agree our categories make a refreshing change from the usual.

GRAPHICS is the first category. Basically, this means er..what the game looks like; colour, definition, animation, imagination. It's safe to say that monochrome Noughts and Crosses will score fairly low.

SONICS next. Sweet music, horrible noise, silence, all will be rated on quality and quantity. This rating involves the use of ears.

GRAB FACTOR We think you'll like this one. Does the game really GRAB you? Are you hooked? Will you miss an episode of The Archers to play it? High Grab Factor means that the whole office abandons work, Bob Wade whoops with delight and even the publisher looks mildly pleased. 100% means the game is more addictive than cider.

STAYING POWER You may have got the habit, but how long are you going to keep it? Staying Power tells you how often you're likely to return to a game. That depends on such matters as the number of screens and levels, the variety of the task, the degree of long-term challenge. An addictive game with only a couple of screens to it will get a high Grab Factor and low Staying Power, one with a 1000-screen playing area but lacking in playability would be the other way round.

AA RATING Nothing to do with cars. This is the result of a very hard sum involving all the other ratings, plus factors like price, quality of packaging and instructions, reliability and any other relevant factors we can think of. You won't go far wrong with any game over 80%.

Compatibility

All games reviewed in this issue are compatible across the CPC range, except *Battlefront* and *Surprise Surprise*, which run only on the 464.

ACTION TEST

BULLSEYE

Macsen, £8.95 cass, keys only

Macsen are swift becoming the Ocean of the quiz game world – if it moves, get a licensing deal on it. This version of Central's *Bullseye* comes complete with Bully, a disembodied throwing hand and an assortment of dart boards.

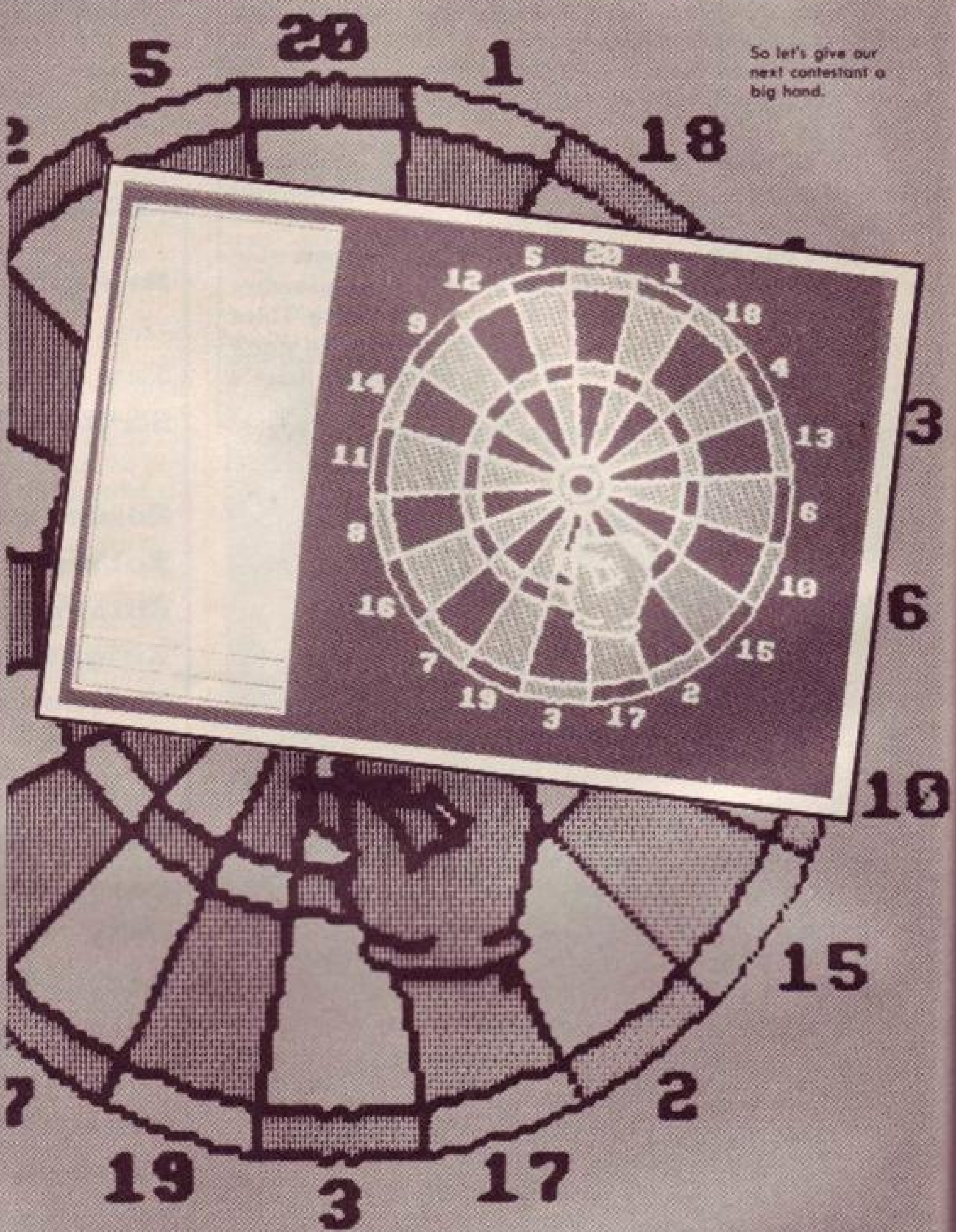
The action, if you can call it that, switches between darts and questions. Your skill at the darts sections will earn you a chance to answer first, or determine the bonus you get if correct. The darts control is quite simple. Use left and right cursor keys to position the hand – then hold the space bar down. This builds up the throwing strength, which determines how high your dart will hit the board. Once the strength has reached the desired level, release the space bar and the dart is thrown. It's simple, and there's a fair element of chance to it, but it's quite entertaining. As for the quiz elements, I've already had my rant on this sort of thing in the *Blockbuster* review. It is very much a matter of opinion but myself, I really cannot see the point in using computers for a task they're so obviously unfit for. The memory size and storage access speed of the basic 464 are nowhere near adequate for a proper quiz game. The only way to avoid repetition – I was asked the same question twice within five minutes – is to keep loading in new sets of questions. This takes ages, and in any case there are only two sets with the game. You can't write new questions at all, or buy new ones.

AW

SECOND OPINION

I enjoyed this – for a few minutes. The dart-throwing was fun, but it doesn't really stretch you. Some of the questions were reasonably gripping, but again there isn' the necessary variety to give it that real lasting interest.

PC



So let's give our next contestant a big hand.

THIRD OPINION

This is a quiz game that will actually appeal to many people. I enjoyed the dart throwing and different quiz sections to the game. It still has some flaws in that the game will become repetitive but there seems plenty of variety in the questions and most importantly the increasing difficulty level. Not a 180 but it might get me to the ockey again.

BW

GREEN SCREEN VIEW

Very playable – you might not be able to see the colours, but the numbers are certainly there.

AW

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **Darts section is fun for a while.**
- ▶ **Bully graphic and throwing hand aren't too bad.**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **It's a quiz game.**
- ▶ **There aren't any prizes.**

GRAPHICS	45%
SONICS	34%
GRAB FACTOR	41%
STAYING POWER	22%
A A RATING	34%



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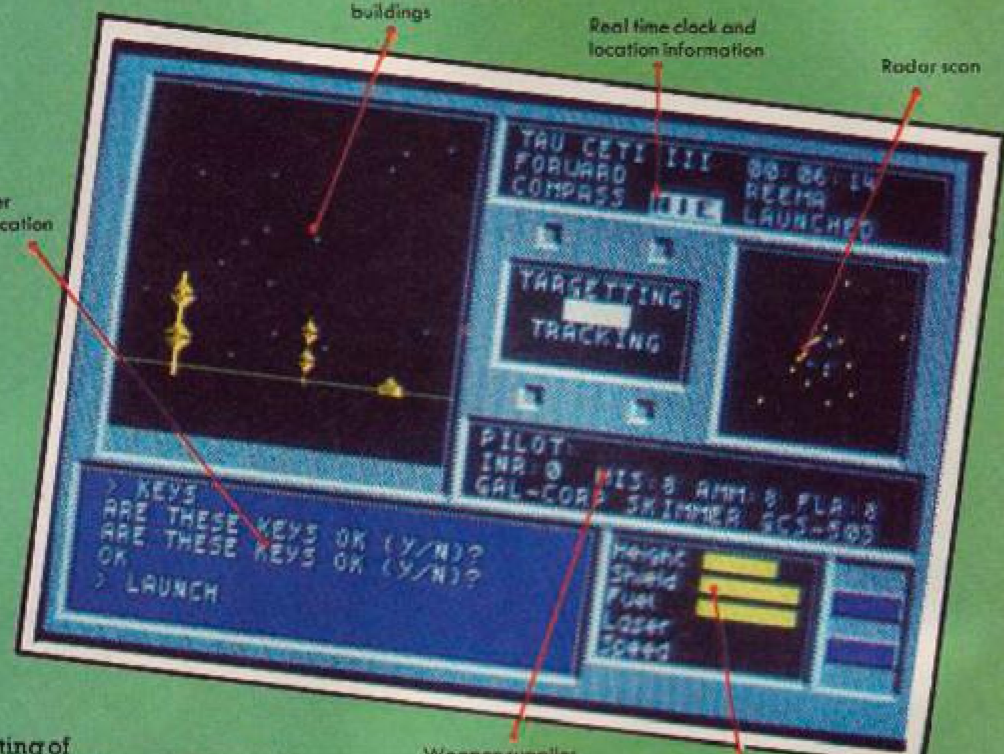
TAU-CETI

CRL, £9.95 cass, £14.95 disk, joystick with keys or keys

In the depths of space the abandoned earth colony, Tau Ceti, has been taken over by its once obedient robot defence systems. In order to retake control of the planet and recolonise it you have to shut down the main fusion reactor that supplies the planet's power.

At first sight the game appears to be just another space shoot-em-up on a planet surface, much like *Dark Star*. Further exploration reveals a far more complicated side to the game that brings in puzzling and strategy, creating a challenge of great depth and difficulty.

> **SECOND OPINION**
>
> *You can't beat a bit of deep space mega-blasting, I always says. When it comes as smoothly presented as this, with a good dose of clever puzzling you can't really grumble. So I won't.*
>
> **PC**



The screen view is of the instrument panel of your skimmer craft from which the whole operation is performed. There are three main areas to the display: a view of the landscape outside, an update area for information from the computer and a readout section from many instruments. The window view is mostly of a desolate landscape with futuristic buildings and craft. This view can also show the insides of buildings when the skimmer is docked and information menus when required.

There are many cities on the planet, each consisting of a variety of structures. The cities can be shown on a planetary map that shows them connected by lines like Percival Lowell's canals on Mars. These lines indicate "jump pads" between cities for rapid movement but finding the pads on the surface may prove hard.

Buildings can be docked with and this is where the puzzling part of the game comes in. Reactor cooling rods are found in some and these have to collected and fitted together so that the main reactor can be shut down. These puzzles take a similar form to the codeword ones in *Impossible Mission* but the difficulty lies less in putting them together than in finding them in the first place.

When docked there are a number of text input commands that provide information or facilities. There is the planetary map, rod assembly, a status report, equipment replacement, note pad, sights, save game and current score. Most of these are only available when docked but there are other commands

STRIKE FORCE HARRIER

Mirrorsoft, £9.95 cass, £14.95 disk, joystick with keys or keys

Flight simulators have come a long way since the days of "take off, fly about, land." They are developing into proper combat simulators where you not only have to learn to fly but need to put those skills to use in both ground and aerial combat. *Skyfox* went along these lines but concentrated on the shoot-em-up aspects.

This simulation requires you to develop flying skills first, having all the dangers of other simulators in crashing, stalling, fuel and landing, but with the highly developed combat scenario to deal with as well. Although this might sound like too much to deal with at once the controls and action do in fact slot into place quite nicely when approached step by step.

The flying controls can be operated by joystick or keyboard with additional functions being run off the keys. These other controls are merely undercarriage, power, flaps, brakes and thrust direction but they affect a number of indicators on the instrument panel. This is composed of a lower half of the screen display and a HUD (heads up display) overlayed on the view through the cockpit. Indicators show the fuel level, speed, vertical speed, height, compass, roll, pitch, thrust and radar but these only need to be referred to at intervals and you'll soon get used to what each one does.

Once the flying is mastered you can put it to good use in taking on tanks and planes before thinking about your overall objective.

> **SECOND OPINION**
>
> *A very impressive combination of simulator and fighting. Lots of controls, but they're well worth mastering. Graphics are pretty and smooth, although the sound is a trifle on the weak side. And it's good fun blasting other planes out of the air.*
>
> **PC**

Below 10,000 feet the view is of trees and hills, amongst which appear tanks. These can be dispatched with bombs or cannon fire. They won't shoot back but the ground defences include SAM missiles that home in and anti-aircraft artillery. Above the cloud layer at 10,000 feet are the enemy MIGs – these can be shot down with cannon or heat-seeking missiles but may reply with their own missiles.

All the armaments are limited in number so that regular stops for refuelling and rearming are needed. These can be made at ground sites that may have to be prepared as you go along. In this step by step manner you can advance towards the enemy HQ, destroying tanks and planes before landing to make another forward base. If the Harrier does come under missile attack it can either try to dodge them, use chaff or infra red flares. Taking too much damage or crashing

A MIG is in view above the cloud layer and is just waiting for a missile to be sent after it



If you can't stand the heat,

AA RAVE

when in flight that are accessed by single keys. These include four weapons systems: lasers, missiles, flares and anti-missile missiles. Apart from the flight controls there is also a status report, view change and infra-red.

THIRD OPINION

The cockpit view may be small, but the bright, well-handled graphics make Tau Ceti III convincingly solid. The skimmer steers like a cow and the speeds aren't exactly breathtaking, but the combat is challenging and the long-term task enormous. The flares are a nice touch, and the IR is beautifully done.

As a shoot-'em-up Tau Ceti would be on the slow side, but with the strategy element to handle you'll be glad of the thinking time. Action, great graphics and real staying power – its a winner.

AW

The infra-red is needed because the game takes place in real Cetan time and at night it is impossible to recognise installations without it. The flares can also be used as an alternative for lighting up the view but they only last for a short while. The IR display is wonderfully done, distorting when you move, but providing adequate night sight. The combat action can be difficult with some cities extremely heavily defended by a variety of robots, some static, others moving but all dangerous when in range. Your lasers and missiles deal death quite efficiently resulting in delightful explosions but they can overheat or run out respectively and the enemy can rapidly damage your shields when close in.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- **Excellent graphics and menu handling make it a pleasure to see.**
- **Tough combat action against a variety of craft.**
- **Very difficult long term task with the rods.**
- **Puzzling and strategy add a demanding dimension.**
- **Lots of options, information and game area.**

BAD NEWS

- **No score given at the end of a game.**
- **Not much in the way of sound.**

GRAPHICS	89%
SONICS	20%
GRAB FACTOR	88%
STAYING POWER	89%
A A RATING	88%

GREEN SCREEN VIEW

Infra Red makes it difficult to see – but not unplayably so.

AW

Spot the defence

Rapid recognition of the defensive installations and their threat to you is important so a quick guide is provided.

MAIN CENTRAL REACTOR: where the rods have to be assembled. Heavily guarded but doesn't shoot you itself – cannot be destroyed.

REACTOR SUBSTATION: likely site of reactor rods, doesn't fire.

CIVILIAN SUPPLY CENTRE: will provide fuel and equipment but no armament.

MILITARY SUPPLY CENTRE: provides weapons.

FORTRESS: static building with plenty of firepower and armour.

CONTROL TOWER: another static building that shoots back.

DOME: not too well protected but still shoots.

SPHERE: take great pleasure in bursting these lightly armoured attackers.

HUNTER MK 1,2 and 3: fast moving, well protected and very dangerous.

JUMP PADS: for fast movement between cities.

AA RAVE



will end the game, leaving you to start the mission all over again.

THIRD OPINION

This one has real long-term interest. The flying skills alone have enough depth for one game, without even trying the central task – all that VIFFing will take time to master. Any complaints? Well, the central task itself has the familiar Combat Lynx drawback –it's such an unrealistically large job for one plane. I mean, there's no need to simulate the RAF that accurately!

AW

The graphics are excellent with some nice explosions when the opposition bite the dust. The flying simulation will test your skills and the combat and mission will give you plenty to keep working at. Infinitely better than *Spitfire 40* and just has the edge over *Skyfox* in graphics and gameplay.

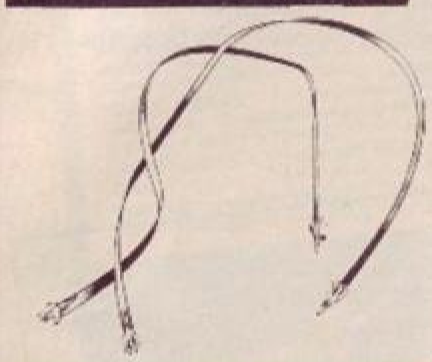
BW

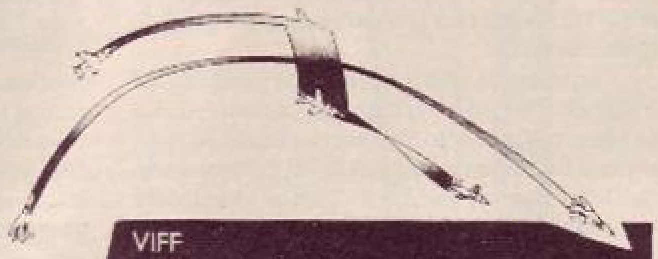

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Flying techniques

The excellent instruction booklet features many illustrated moves for aerial dogfighting categorised under three headings: defence, attack and VIFFing. The latter of these involves vertical thrust being used to efect sudden changes of speed and direction.

DEFENCE
When being attacked from behind a quick burst of vertical thrust will make a defensive break to put the Harrier on its adversary's tail.





VIFF
The two planes are climbing in a dogfight, the harrier avoids being outrun by using vertical thrust to flip it in behind the opponent.

ATTACK
The high speed yoyo can be used to break a stalemate where the attacker is unable to close with his opponent. Initially he gains height and then dives, gaining extra speed to latch onto the opponent's tail.



GREEN SCREEN VIEW

Bit muddy in mono, I'm afraid – bursting through the clouds isn't half as spectacular.

AW

G O O D N E W S

- ▶ **Great graphics below and above the cloud layer.**
- ▶ **Good piloting simulation.**
- ▶ **Fine combat action both above and below clouds.**
- ▶ **Tough long term task.**
- ▶ **The best flight simulator/air combat game yet.**

B A D N E W S

- ▶ **May take some time to get proficient.**

GRAPHICS	92%
SONICS	45%
GRAB FACTOR	90%
STAYING POWER	93%
A A RATING	91%

BATTLEFRONT

Central Solutions, £1.99 cass, keys only

War games have become more impressive and playable of late but unfortunately this first budget war game doesn't measure up to those improved standards. It doesn't recreate any particular battle and is reminiscent in format of old Lothlorien games like *Johnny Reb* and *Redcoats*.

The battlefield is a single screen with a number of terrain features and, of course, the two opposing forces. The battle is to either capture a set number of enemy cities or to annihilate the opposition forces completely. The game can only be played by two players and not against the computer so you'll definitely need a friend to be your enemy.

During the game each player has to control five types of ground forces and two types of air unit. The air units are fast moving and can cover a lot of the map quickly doing two different tasks. Fighters can attack other air units and ground units while transport planes can move certain ground units rapidly between locations. These units can also be destroyed by ground fire.

The five types of ground units are engineers, scouts, infantry, artillery and tanks. These all have different fighting ranges and combat strengths that determine the outcomes of battles. They are also limited in their movement potential by particular terrain features that may restrict or completely block their passage.

Movement of units takes place in a predetermined order and is controlled using the keyboard. Combat occurs automatically when units are within range of each other but some can also be given specific special orders. They can entrench to offer stiffer resistance, engineers can build and destroy bridges and infantry units can board transport planes and become paratroopers.

The game can be altered to suit your taste with the battlefield terrain, units and unit positions being changeable. This means you can set up different battles but is still fairly limiting because of the single screen and small number of terrain and unit choices.

For the money this is a reasonable value war game, even though there is nothing very original about it. It pales into insignificance in the face of the PSS and CCS games but if you can only afford £1.99 you could do worse.

BW



Lots of bangs, crashes and fights to the death

SECOND OPINION

Pretty old-fashioned as war games now go, but it does have the design-your-own battle facility and the price is attractive. Shame there's no option to paly the computer.

PC

THIRD OPINION

Not bad, but definitely not the war game to end all war games.

AW

GREEN SCREEN VIEW

Quite playable.

AW

G O O D N E W S

- ▶ **The price.**
- ▶ **Game-set up can be altered as you wish.**

B A D N E W S

- ▶ **Two player game only.**
- ▶ **Uninspiring graphics and sound.**
- ▶ **Single screen action that is very limited.**

GRAPHICS	32%
SONICS	18%
GRAB FACTOR	42%
STAYING POWER	47%
A A RATING	44%

COSTA CAPERS

Firebird, £7.95 cass, joystick or keys

If the star of this game, Ted Blewitt, looks familiar it's because the authors were also responsible for the Hewson game *Technician Ted*. He hasn't changed much under his new allegiance – he's got the same animation and ear-aching sound effects in a new arcade adventure.

Here Ted is going on holiday but all his luggage has been lost. You guessed – he has to retrieve it. Then he has to take snapshots of all the locations and develop them to show his mates. First he has to find a camera and then take pictures of all 36 screens. Getting into all 36 is the hard part since many puzzles and tasks have to be done in order to allow access to particular screens.

SECOND OPINION

Too similar to T. Ted for my taste. Reasonably tough arcade game – but it's a shame about the graphics. Not to mention those nauseating sound effects.

PC

The screens are made up of some very small objects and fine detail. Unfortunately this all looks rather plain and uninteresting with some pretty odd colour choices. The animation on Ted and some of the other characters is excellent but again is rather too small to be appreciated properly. Some of these characters, particularly blocks marked "lift", can help you on your way by providing platforms to walk or jump on but many are deadly to touch.

Ted can walk around or jump in great long arcs and by using platforms, ladders and objects get under, over or through most obstacles. Carrying particular objects will make doors, floors and nasties appear or disappear and most of these have to be found by trial and error rather than by any intellectual means. Two things you do need of course are the camera for taking pictures and money to buy all the other objects.

THIRD OPINION

Very dull, very tired and vastly overpriced. The problems may be tough, but I can't see anyone putting up with the graphics long enough.

AW

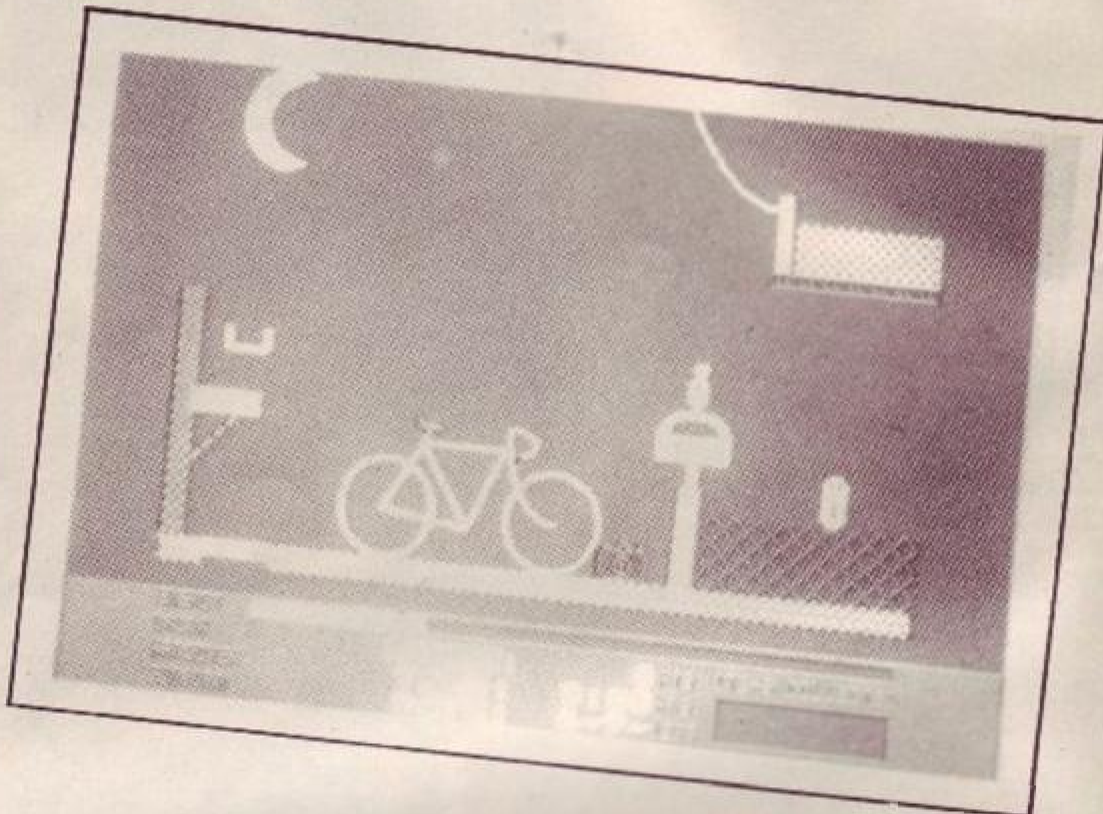
Some objects do have an unfortunate effect on Ted though. Too many cans of lager and glasses of wine will make him drunk, which starts to mess the controls. Once's he's recovered from that the hangover will set in and if it's bad enough he'll start doing his *Chariots of Fire* impression, moving very slowly indeed. Too much exposure to the sun also causes problems by getting him sunburnt.

These factors are important because of the twin time factors Ted is up against. Firstly he has to complete his task before August 10th (game starts in early July) and secondly before his energy runs out. Energy is depleted by collisions with nasties and long falls. This last factor is what causes the game's greatest fault.

Sometimes when walking or jumping off a screen Ted goes straight into a fatal fall. He is then returned to the start of that screen where he repeats the fall in an infinite loop until the energy runs out. This is absolutely infuriating since there is no way out of it and one slip could ruin a long tough game.

The one-channel tune and jumping sound effect are guaranteed to irritate as is the infinite death loop (imagine one of those combined with an infinite life poke!) The character and task aren't desperately original although they will provide plenty of challenge. Rather disappointing in many areas – perhaps it should have been a budget game instead.

BW





GREEN SCREEN VIEW

Not too bad – after all, the colour isn't a major feature.

AW

GOOD NEWS

- ► **Tough game task.**
- ► **Some good ideas like getting drunk, hangovers and sunburn.**
- ► **Game concept will be familiar to *Technician Ted* players.**

BAD NEWS

- ► **Wildly frustrating infinite death loops.**
- ► **Nauseating sound effects.**
- ► **Although detailed the graphics are disappointing.**
- ► **Gameplay seems to rely on trial and error rather than logic.**

GRAPHICS	53%
SONICS	38%
GRAB FACTOR	52%
STAYING POWER	61%
A A RATING	54%

 The stewardess will be serving drinks very soon

SIREN SOFTWARE

CYLU

Firebird, £3.99 cass, keys only

This is the latest in the Super Silver range and it's another arcade adventure featuring the 3D graphics that characterized the Ultimate games and *Chimera*. You are once again controlling a robot – this time called Cylu – in a test of skill that will make you the leader of the people if you pass it, or even get you on our high score tables.

The screen designs are very much as in *Chimera* but with more nice touches and movement to them. Each screen is part of a large maze which has to be explored in order to complete the task, but each individual screen is in fact very small. They only occupy a small area in the middle of the screen with a status screen below and the rest of the space black and unused.

The robot begins his task next to a master computer and this is the point to which he will have to frequently return. His job is to deposit 24 objects found in the maze to this point in order to complete the game. However to get at all 24 he has to overcome many obstacles.

The most important of these is his fuel supply, which is continually running out whether he moves around or not and when it reaches zero it ends the game. There are 30 fuel canisters lying around the maze which can be stored in one of the five cargo bays along with many other objects and used when fuel is low. There is also a master refuel unit but that is a good deal harder to get hold of.

Other hazards will only delay Cylu's progress and not kill him, but with the frightening rate at which fuel disappears that is punishment enough. Apart from the twists and turns of the maze that call for good mapping skills and many repeated games there are 32 forcefields that bar the way to sections of the maze.

SECOND OPINION

This struck me as a shrunken version of Chimera *and, as such, nowhere near as satisfying as that game. Mappers and puzzlers will find enough to entertain them, but there's a limit to how long a 3D-rooms-with-robot game can hold my attention.*

PC

The force fields can be deactivated by depositing a silicon chip at the master computer but each chip will work on a different barrier. This means that again you will have to work out the best route and strategy to survive as long as possible by repeated exploration. Walking isn't the only way of getting around, though, since there are teleport terminals that get you to isolated areas of the maze when used with the right key.

There are several controls to manipulate the objects you find: get, drop, examine, use and examine force field. These will help you identify objects and in the case of force fields, which chip will deactivate them. This puzzling element adds a lot of interest to the game although it does still rely a good deal on trial and error.

There is a save game option but the action takes place at a fairly rapid rate so that you probably won't find much need for this. It demands quick thinking and action and until you've mapped a lot of it a fair bit of luck. Certainly one that will have to be worked at for a long while to complete.

BW

THIRD OPINION

The graphics are small but perfectly formed, the animation's nice and the playing area's interesting. There are minor gripes – the sound's weak, the colours are gaudy and there's no joystick control – but the main gripe is the dull long-term task. It's certainly playable, and represents quite good value for money. It would just be nice to have something a bit more interesting to do in this kind of game.

AW

DEATHSVILLE

Bubble Bus, £8.95 cass, £12.95 disk. Joystick or keys

This charmingly entitled game is from the same authors who produced *Tombstowne* under the Amsoft label (Tombstowne/Deathsville get it?). It features another assortment of ghoulish inhabitants and a testing series of arcade adventure puzzles.

The hero is once again Sammy Solver who having apparently got out of *Tombstowne* is now trapped in Deathsville and has to get out of there. Once may have been an accident but twice seems rather careless. Fortunately his adventures in this new game are completely different with a whole new town and an awful lot of objects and locations.

There are about 50 locations, each one featuring some very nice background graphics including some rather unpleasant pictures of a guillotine and severed heads. Some locations have moving hazards that drain Sammy's energy when they touch him. These move in patterns but can be fairly easily avoided most of the time.

Sammy's energy is represented by a gruesome hand at the top of the screen which moves towards Sammy as energy falls and will eventually grab him and drag him to a tombstone. Energy can be replenished though by picking up a particular object which will push the hand backwards slightly.

You can carry up to four objects at once and when you are carrying the right object and walk to the right place a task will be automatically completed. At first this will be extremely difficult because not only have you got to work out what an object does but what it is. This is because many objects are not instantly recognisable.

SECOND OPINION

A pleasant enough arcade adventure, if you can take the ghoulish scenario. Very hard to work out how to crack it, and it has some nice-ishgraphics. But why is Sammy transparent?

PC

The animation on Sammy as he walks and jumps around is good but he is completely white – either he's very scared or the programmers were trying to avoid colour clashes.

THIRD OPINION

The graphics may be colourful, but they're also rather messy. If identifying obscure and poorly drawn objects is your idea of a challenge then it's certainly challenging, but it's all pretty unrewarding. I always thought the idea of large graphics was to allow more detail – as it is they're just large.

AW

The game will not be at all easy to complete because there are an awful lot of tasks to do. However the frustration of not being able to recognise some of the objects may cause problems. If you enjoyed *Tombstowne* you'll certainly have fun with this one but I can't see Sammy Solver establishing the same sort of fan club for his pot belly as Wally Week has.

BW

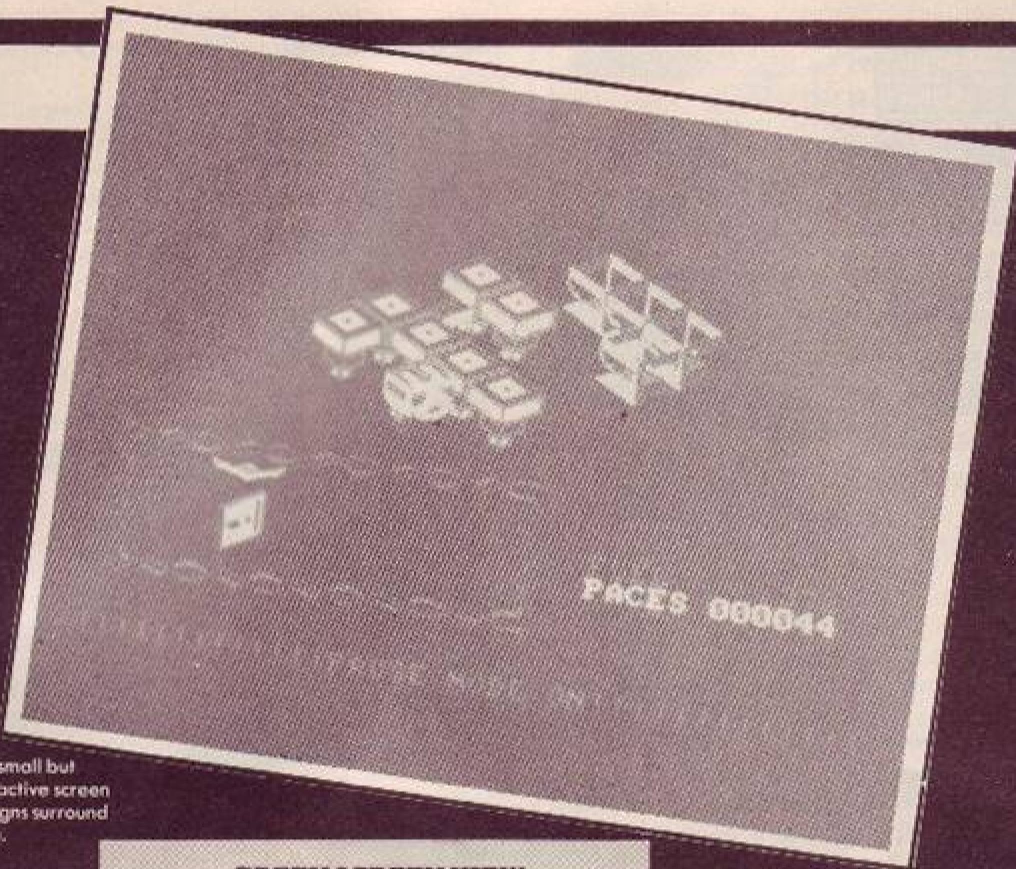


Sammy Solver strikes again in the detailed land of ghosts and ghouls

GREEN SCREEN VIEW

Everything's perfectly visible, for what that's worth – but colour was all the graphics had going for them anyway, in my book.

AW



The small but attractive screen designs surround Cylu.

GREEN SCREEN VIEW

Those garish colour combinations might be ugly with a modulator, but they're a real problem on a green screen. A real squinter, I'm afraid.

AW

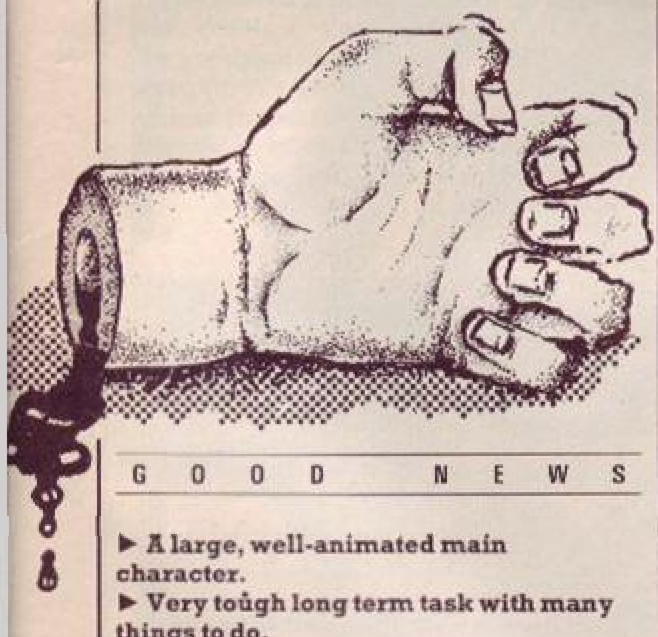
G O O D N E W S

- **Attractive screens and colour.**
- **Complicated playing area to explore.**
- **Tough game task that will take many, many games and mapping to complete.**
- **Puzzle element adds nicely to the game.**

B A D N E W S

- **Screens occupy a very small display area.**
- **Fuel runs out much too fast for my liking.**

GRAPHICS	81%
SONICS	24%
GRAB FACTOR	77%
STAYING POWER	72%
A A RATING	75%



G O O D N E W S

- **A large, well-animated main character.**
- **Very tough long term task with many things to do.**
- **Colourful backgrounds and screen design.**

B A D N E W S

- **Hard to identify some objects.**
- **May take a long while to work out the tasks and therefore get hooked.**

GRAPHICS	70%
SONICS	44%
GRAB FACTOR	58%
STAYING POWER	69%
A A RATING	66%

BATTLE OF THE PLANETS

Mikro-Gen, £9.95 cass, joystick or keys

The first two things you'll notice about this cartoon inspired game are the stunning vector graphics and the pitiful lack of helpful instructions. It's based on the cartoons starring the G-Force in their battle against the forces of Spectra. The game however has very little relevance to its origin, though, and is basically just a shoot-em-up.

The opening titles and music look and sound nice but pale into insignificance when the game graphics pop into view. These consist of some of the smoothest and fastest vector graphics I've seen. The idea of the game is to protect five planets against the attack of Zoltar's (the evil, nasty, horrible bad guy OK?) forces both in space and on the planets. You won't find even that in the instructions but basically it just means shoot everything in sight.

You start in space near to one planet where the only other things present are enemy ships and a warp gate. The gate is used for getting to the other four planets but these merely have a different type of enemy ship to fight. The ships can be destroyed by repeated hits with a laser or by the more effective, but harder to aim, neutron torpedoes. This action is very reminiscent of *3D Starstrike* with the laser cursor being moved around the screen although it also controls the direction of the ship's movement.

The ships can shoot back though and you need to watch several indicators that could lead to G-Force's downfall. Shields are the most important and must not be allowed to reach zero, but fuel will also run out and both will have to be replenished after a few dogfights. This is done by descending to the planet surface where a new combat can take place.

SECOND OPINION

Very impressive graphics and a rare treat for the unrepentant mega-blaster. There isn't much depth to the game, but sometimes that can be an advantage. Annoying, though, that there weren't more noises and spectacular explosions.

PC

There is a certain amount of life on the planets that has to be preserved or once again the ship will be destroyed. It is reduced by landers on the planet surface so that at the same time as picking up fuel and repairs you have to blast the tanks and other vehicles that roam the surface. The cursor is the same as the space scenes but against a mountainous background and with lines moving down the display to indicate forward motion.

Points are scored for every craft destroyed and the game continues for as long as you can avoid losing your one and only ship. There are five different information display boxes that can be called up : shields, power, planet, torpedoes and lasers, all of which indicate when their status is dangerous to your health.

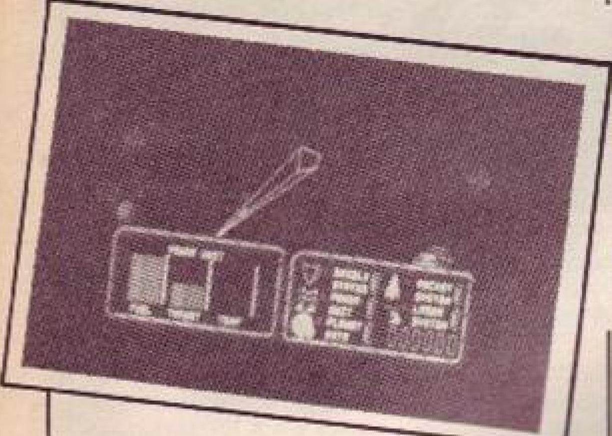
The gameplay is simply a matter of staying alive for as long as possible and killing as much as possible. There seems to be no end to the supply of alien hordes and there is certainly no escape. As a straight shoot-em-up it's not bad but lacks the real depth of games like *Elite* and *Tau Ceti*. The graphics are excellent but the sound effects aren't that hot particularly because you are given no audible indication that other ships are shooting at you. You'll blast away happily for a while but will soon find there is too little variety and depth.

BW

THIRD OPINION

Nice vectors, shame about the gameplay – it's also, come to think of it, a shame about the weak sound, the poor instructions and the overall lack of variety. The task is limited, the combat uninspiring, the game as a whole badly lacking in imagination. Lovely vectors, though.

AW



Stunning vector graphics – but where's the staying power?

GREEN SCREEN VIEW

For once, here is a game with redefinable colours – surely the best solution to green screen visibility problems. Question is, why don't all games have this?

AW

G O O D N E W S

- ▶ Terrific 3D vector graphics.
- ▶ Two arenas of action: space and planet.
- ▶ Helpful information areas, well designed.

B A D N E W S

- ▶ Little depth to the action.
- ▶ No audible indication of enemy hits.
- ▶ Can't redefine controls to get true "pilot" controls (ie "up" = dive).

GRAPHICS	91%
SONICS	41%
GRAB FACTOR	72%
STAYING POWER	54%
A A RATING	64%

THREE WEEKS IN PARADISE

Mikro-Gen, £9.95 cass, joystick or keys

The Week family are back and you'll probably have guessed from the appalling pun in the title that there are three of them involved this time – Wally, Wilma and Herbert. Wally has to rescue his spouse and son from the hungry Can Nibbles (that's enough punishment thank you) in the jungle.

The game follows the same format as *Pyjamarama* and *Herbert's Dummy Run* with single character control and a whole load of tasks to be completed using the many objects found in the depths of the jungle. You control the ever fatter Wally and have to rescue Wilma, who is hanging upside down from a tree creeper, and Herbert, who is busy becoming a tasty stew in a cooking pot.

SECOND OPINION

I've had some good times with the Weeks over the years. I'm very fond of them, even if they are a bunch of slobs. But this time the old magic is missing and I don't really care about their fate – if the Can Nibbles think they're edible, then good luck to them.

PC

As with all the previous games you can only carry two objects at once – these range from flip-flops, through Wilma's handbag to a goldfish bowl. Each of these will have a use but there might be the odd red herring thrown in. Where and how to use things can be extremly difficult to work out; sometimes things will happen automatically and at others you'll have to have a flash of inspiration (or a lot of luck) to make something work.

The graphics are once again superb with excellent use of colour and some good animation. There are some very attractive screen designs and the animals look especially nice with a clawing crab, roaring lions and a bald emu. There are also the usual set of clever little extras thrown in where Wally can go swimming or operate a geyser.

THIRD OPINION

Big, bright graphics are all very well, but the Wally game idea is getting a bit overworked by now. There's a lot of puzzling to be done, but the puzzles do have a certain sameness about them which can get tiring. It's a good game, and a full solution will take you a fair old time – an original scenario would have earned it a rather higher rating, though.

AW

Wally doesn't have an energy gauge any more. Instead, one of his four lives can be lost instantly by bumping into the wrong thing. This can be a Can Nibble or one of the animals but the effect is always the same – he sits down in a daze and then leaps to his feet hollering 'ouch!' This can be quite frustrating though since one wrong move can ruin a lot of hard work.



Wally is at it again, this time in a very pretty but dangerous jungle

As in previous adventures Wally can jump on certain pieces of the scenery, or even through them! Movement between screens is achieved by just walking off the edges but sometimes there are also entrances "into" the screen which are accessed by jumping into them or by pressing a key.

Although the game is graphically excellent and features lots of fairly complicated tasks you do get the feeling of having seen it all before in *Everyone's a Wally* and *Herbert's Dummy Run*. Fans of the genre will love it and if you haven't played a Wally game before it's as good an introduction as any. However I still suspect that many people will have tired of this format by now and will want something different.

BW

GREEN SCREEN VIEW

Loses a lot without colour – the jungle settings aren't nearly so much fun.

AW

G O O D N E W S

- ▶ Excellent use of colour and animation.
- ▶ Plenty of difficult tasks to complete.
- ▶ Fans of the Wally genre will like it.

B A D N E W S

- ▶ Solutions can be rather obscure.
- ▶ The game format is becoming tired.
- ▶ Instant life loss can be annoying in an arcade adventure of this sort.

GRAPHICS	92%
SONICS	42%
GRAB FACTOR	62%
STAYING POWER	72%
A A RATING	67%

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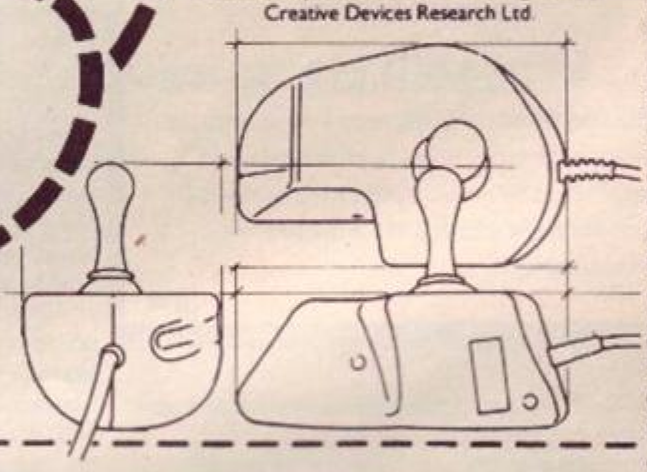
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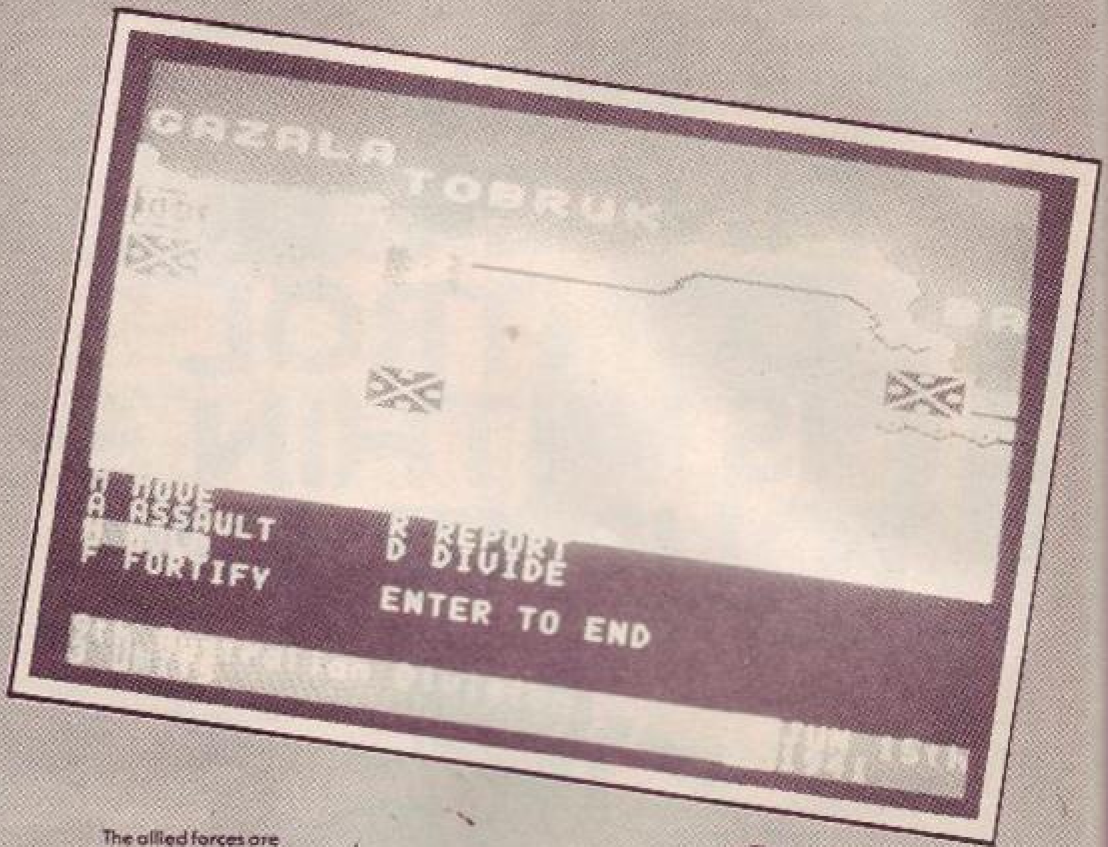
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DESERT RATS

CCS, £9.95 cass, joystick with keys or keys

This massive re-creation of the North African campaign during World War II is by the same author who brought us *Arnhem*. It features many similarities in the graphics and event handling but of course the objectives, complexity and events differ greatly.

There are six scenarios within the game and these cover different periods from March 1941 to December 1942. The shortest of the six games is only seven turns long and can be completed quite quickly as an introductory battle. The longest is a staggering 624 turns long and will take many sessions to complete, let alone win. One or two players can play the game and against the computer you can control either the axis or the allied forces.



The allied forces are boxed in at Tobruk

SECOND OPINION

Just as impressive as its predecessor Arnhem, although there are subtle differences in the gameplay. The seven-move scenario will prove invaluable in encouraging beginners to have a go. The 624 scenario, though, is strictly for the dedicated

PC

The game is played on a scrolling map of North Africa from Alexandria in the East to El Agheila in the west. It takes in such famous names as El Alamein and Tobruk, the conflicts involving each being recreated as one of the scenarios. The axis and allied units appear on the map as squares which you control using a cursor. When the cursor is moved off the edge of the screen it scrolls rather jerkily to reveal more of the map.

THIRD OPINION

Plenty of depth and some real staying power – this one'll keep the strategy fans up into the wee small hours. I wouldn't have minded something a little more informative than all those machine gun noises in the battle phases, though.

AW

Each scenario has a different victory objective for the two sides such as holding or capturing a particular location or road. This has to be achieved by the end of a number of "turns", at the end of which you are told the result and given the option to extend the game to the next scenario. During the turns a number of commands are available for each unit under your control and also status report on the units.

There are eight basic commands although they won't all be available to a particular unit at any one time. *Move* orders a unit to a new location and battle will result if it is adjacent to an enemy unit. *Assault* is the same as move except that the attack will be stronger and result in more losses on both sides. *Hold* will cause a unit to dig in where it is and *fortify* will strengthen that order with more defences. *Travel* is used for rapid road transport and *go to port* will transfer a unit by sea between Alexandria and Tobruk. *Divide* will separate units stacked on top of each other.

Report is the last command and will give a readout on the strength, moves per turn, supplies, morale, attack modifier, efficiency and fortification of a unit. All this information, combined with that on the terrain and unit characteristics in the instructions, will help you decide what a unit should do and where.

Much of the lasting challenge and complexity in the game is derived from gradually learning about the supply situation, reinforcements and combat effects that result with different events and actions. Particularly with the long scenario this allows for plenty of depth of learning to the game and of course infinitely different courses of events dependent on your actions.

The map and units are nicely drawn and although the scrolling is rough it presents a pleasant screen display. The noises of battle are valuable for once with the length of the bangs and rat-a-tats indicating the damage done in a particular attack. A worthy follow up to *Arnhem* that will have war game fans engrossed for many weeks.

BW



GREEN SCREEN VIEW

This can be a bit of a tough one to play in mono. Allied and axis units do face different ways, but this doesn't help much.

AW

G O O D   N E W S

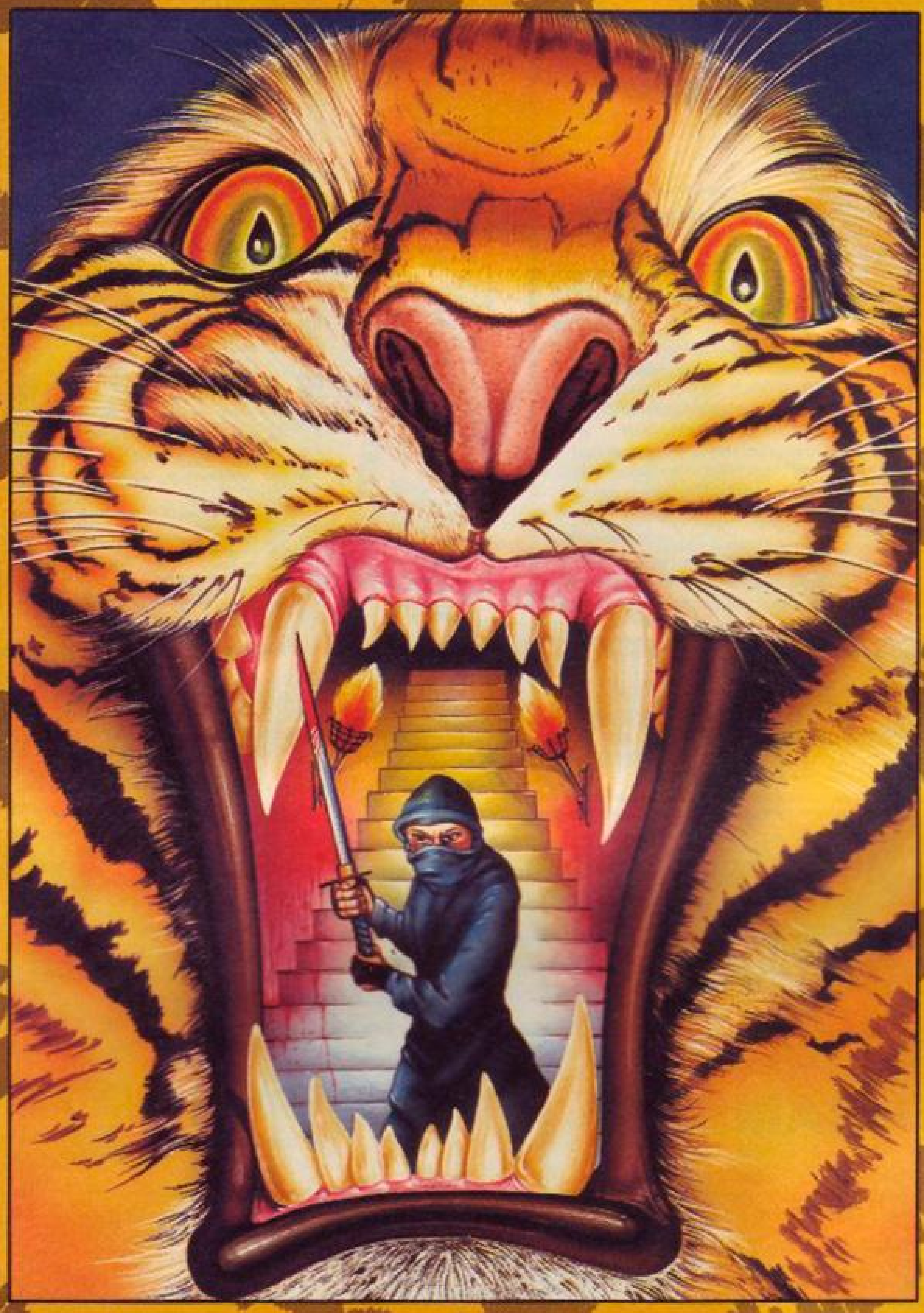
- **Six scenarios of variable length.**
- **A massive full game that will keep you busy for weeks.**
- **Plenty of depth to the game once you learn the basics.**
- **Excellent instructions with historical notes.**

B A D   N E W S

- **Not very attractive to non-wargamers.**
- **The scrolling is jerky.**

GRAPHICS	66%
SONICS	17%
GRAB FACTOR	75%
STAYING POWER	81%
A A RATING	78%

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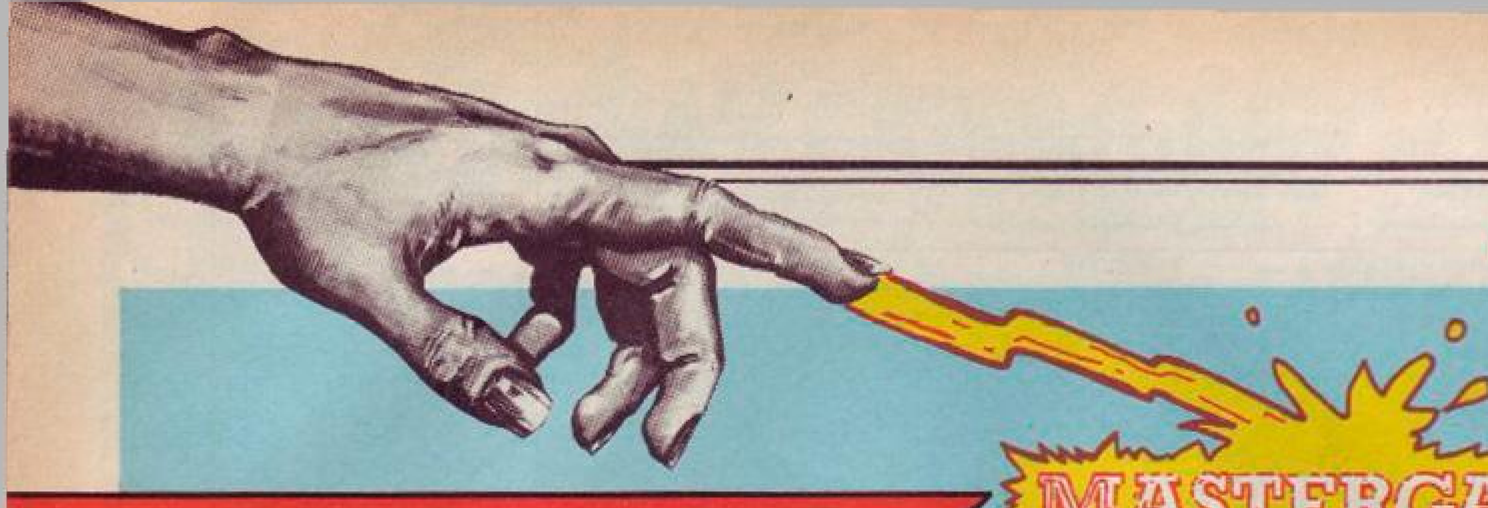
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When you've cornered the germ bags...

COMET

FIREBIRD



MASTERGAME

RASPUTIN

Firebird, £7.95 cass, joystick or keys

If you were expecting tales of a hairy, lecherous Russian doing unspeakable things to the women of the Czar's court you'll be disappointed. If you wanted an exceptionally difficult arcade adventure with terrific graphics, maddeningly addictive gameplay and some great features then hold onto your fur hats, vodkas and Cossacks because this is it.

Rasputin is indeed the evil figure behind the game and whose power you have to destroy. To do this you have to obtain a jewel, but this is the final step in a very long task comprised of numerous steps. The screen display is a 3D view of various courtyards and obstacles that twist into some complicated layouts with many features.

Too tough

The game is so difficult that many people may feel it is asking too much of the gamesplayer. This thought is countered by the fact that here in the office we just couldn't stop playing it. The addictive quality is in exploring the game, discovering new rooms, completing tasks and just trying to cope with the sheer scale of the task.

Scoring a fraction of a percent on most of your early games doesn't put you off but encourages greater effort to string all the tasks together. Once you've learnt how to crack some rooms things will start to fall into place and higher scores can be achieved – any game now I'll crack that one percent barrier.

or not too tough?

You control a Crusader knight who is armed only with a sword and a shield and the ability to jump about in armour – although he doesn't clank. He can be rotated left and right and walked forward, diagonally when he is facing "up" or "down" screen. This tried and trusted perspective from games like the Ultimate titles and *Chimera* works well, although the control can be difficult, particularly in tight spots where you inevitably panic.

On exiting from the start room you find a main corridor with eight doors leading off it, each one marked with one of the Russian letters that together spell Rasputin. The corridor is populated by guards who initially don't move but will become activated with time. The moving ones can be killed with your sword but they can also kill you. This returns you to the start of the screen and costs vital "life force" energy.

If life force runs out then the game ends and you're given a percentage score. The best I've managed is 0.68% so you can see how tough the game is. Anyone who can find an infinite life-force poke will deserve a medal (or a tenner). Life force is also severely depleted by walking off a platform into mid air, causing you to plummet to a screen bare apart from some clouds. Crusader will land on one of these and float back up – but he loses a lot of energy while he does so.

SECOND OPINION

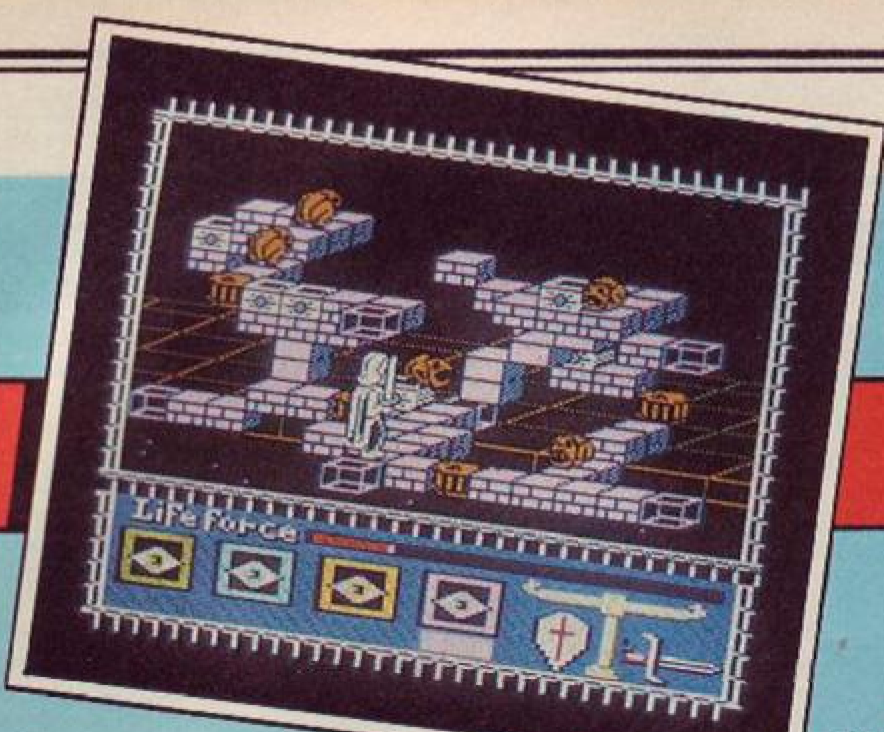
If the great Bob Wade scored less than 1%, you can imagine how well I did. I'm too ashamed to mention a figure. The game is tremendously tough, and brilliantly executed. Despite its initial similarity to all the other 3D arcade adventures it's a program of real class and more than a little originality.

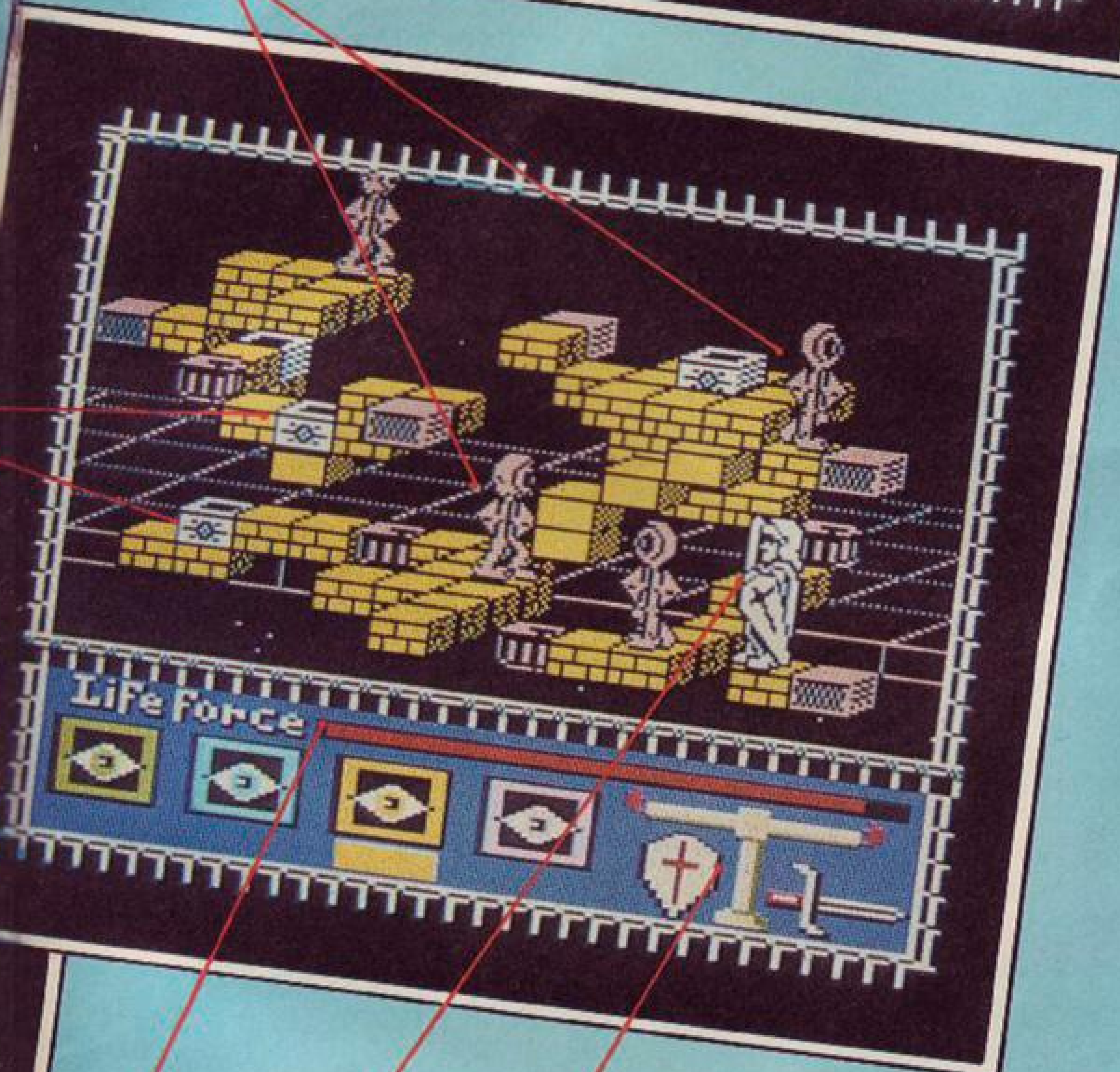
PC

Collectable white block



Rasputin hovers in the background of the start screen





In some of these screens there are white blocks to be jumped on to make them disappear. When all of them on one screen have been absorbed a monster head will appear that has to be destroyed to obtain another white block. Once you've got that you are past the first basic stage. All you have to do now is repeat that seven more times, identify the colour coded sections, neutralise the sets of evil eyes, get the letters and... I give up. Suffice to say there is plenty to do and all will become clear in time.

The game will have to be approached in an orderly fashionand completed stage by stage. Efficient use of sword and shield strength, which are very limited, is essential to the final completion of the task but completing this game may take months. A superb game with terrific graphics, fantastically addictive gameplay and one of the toughest overall objectives in an arcade adventure yet.

BW

GREEN SCREEN VIEW

Everything's perfectly visible, but you needn't think that'll save you.

AW

THIRD OPINION

This game is mean. It just keeps killing you, and you just keep coming back for more. If the wicked perspectives don't get get you, the monsters will – but it's so addictive, you just can't stop playing it. Prepare yourself for sleepless nights, derisory scores and endless frustration.

AW

Entering any of the eight doorways will reveal the nasty nature of your task. They are all constructed of blocks to make platforms, stairways and lifts with 3D perspective often playing a part to confuse your path ahead. The real problem isn't moving around though – it's the weird and deadly varieties of life that inhabit nearly every screen. These include tall cyclopian creatures, bouncing balls, fire-breathing dragons, transparent killer blocks, evil eyes and a cross between a bulldog and a plucked chicken. Most of these can be fended off or killed using the sword and shield.

G O O D   N E W S

- **Beautiful and deviously designed rooms.**
- **Great monsters and other moving features.**
- **A tremendously tough long term task – will it ever be completed?**
- **Many stages requiring both good reactions and platform planning.**
- **Puzzling, mapping and a good memory are needed.**

B A D   N E W S

- **Maybe a bit too tough?**

GRAPHICS	87%
SONICS	57%
GRAB FACTOR	94%
STAYING POWER	93%
A A RATING	92%

PREVIEWS

Zoids

Set on the planet Zoidstar, this Martech game stars the plastic Tomy toys that look like dinosaurs, in what is one of the industry's better games produced by a licensing deal. The game is a battle between the blue and red Zoid factions for control of the planet and your personal battle to create the mighty Zoidzilla to take on Redhorn the Terrible, the red Zoid leader.

The action is all icon-driven and will include a very strong strategic element as well as plenty of hard and fast action. In a ten city network six pieces of Zoidzilla are hidden and have to be recovered. To do this the cities have to be destroyed and attacks from red Zoids beaten off.

The icons allow you to control the Zoid in many ways including identify enemy Zoids, scan for objects, examine your Zoid's status, use cannon against missile attacks, fire missiles, radio base for missiles and to collect bits of Zoidzilla, information on features and to move about. The action is shown on a scrolling map but most events take place in other separate windows which make for a continually changing, colourful and interesting display.

Your Zoid gets more powerful as you collect bits of Zoidzilla but so does the opposition. It looks like being an extremely tough game with plenty to do both on the strategy and action side. The icons and windows are interesting control features that should add nicely to the gameplay.

The Eidolon

'Fractals!', I hear you cry – and you'd be right because this game will feature that obscure branch of mathematics that has everybody in the computer game world in a tizzy. Understanding what they are isn't important – it's extremely complicated and I can't follow it. But what they do on screen is very important and very exciting.

They create a moving 3D environment that in this case is combined with some superbly animated monsters. The demos we've seen are separate ones of the creatures and the moving fractals. The fractals create a cave network in which all the action takes place. This network is supposedly the inside of your mind and the Eidolon is a craft which allows you to explore it.

The corridors move by you with a speed, smoothness and detail that is a pleasure to watch even without any gameplay. The corridors are relatively bare but once you start moving around them it's easy to believe in the environment created.

The monsters were on a separate demo but it is easy to imagine them transplanted into the corridors to menace your craft and mission. The mission is to get through the seven levels of the game by passing seven guardians. Each guardian has to be killed and a shield to the next level broken by a crystal. The crystals are obtained by defeating other creatures in the mind maze. Both these and the guardians are dealt with using fireballs.

There are several different types of fireball that can damage, freeze or mutate creatures but firing them costs energy. The creatures retaliate with their own fire and sap your energy when in contact. On the demos there was no gameplay to be evaluated but on the strength of the graphics and animation this looks like being a superb game.



Tobruk

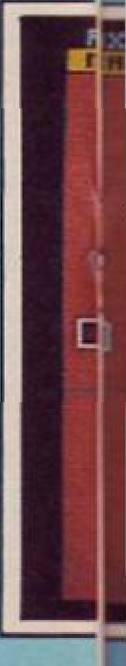
This is the latest of the wargames from the boys at PSS and follows a similar pattern to the previous ones. It re-enacts the battle for Tobruk with Rommel on one side and Monty on the other. The format will be similar to *Theatre Europe, Battle for Midway* and *Battle of Britain* with a strong strategic element and optional arcade sequences.

We've only seen the strategic element of the game but that alone looks very strong – better than the previous titles. The player can take the role of the axis or allied forces as they battle to capture or defend as many towns as possible. The map isn't finished yet but you can see it will have the usual PSS attention to detail.

The two player game should be quite interesting since there will be an option to use networked Amstrads to give perfect hidden movement against a human opponent. You'll need to be able to network two machines first though. It's an interesting extra that may well promote a new type of game, previously unseen on Arnold, but that will take some time and many games to take off properly.

The strategic element includes moving your forces, engaging in combat, allocating supplies, controlling air support, dealing with minefields and maintaining your armoured forces. The arcade sequences will include a tank simulator which should add the customary optional shoot-em-up element.

Tobruk looks set to follow in the excellent traditions of the Wargamer's series. But it's unlikely to stir up as much controversy as *Theatre Europe* or *Battle of Britain*.



Guide your missiles through this mountain range to their targets.



One of the guardian dragons – wait till you see that neck animation.







BARCHOU

Central Solutions, £1.99 cass, joystick or keys

Central Solutions' new cheapo range, of which *Barchou* is part, is unlikely to make Mastertronic tremble. A couple of years ago, this game might have seemed a bargain at the price, but nowadays the punter rightly demands a lot more.

Barchou is a shoot-em-up with some reasonable graphics, but little else to recommend it. Your task is to defend four cities at the bottom of the screen from the nasty aliens who are dropping bombs from the top. You control a jet-packed figure of flickering brilliance who hovers around trying to dodge and blast the aliens while catching the bombs before they hit the cities.

SECOND OPINION

For a few minutes you may sit and blast merrily away at things but the game's drawbacks rapidly start raising the boredom threshold past brain-numbing. The collision detection is infuriating leading to the worst criticism of any computer game – "it's not fair". It's pretty alright – pretty tedious.

BW

And that's about it. It's fun for a few minutes, but soon becomes very tedious – mainly because the program's collision detection routine is so bad that you have a real job staying alive.

Why the game is called *Barchou* remains a mystery. The name seems to have nothing to do with the action or with the scenario on the inlay.

PC



Zap, bang, kapow, whizz, blast, yawn.

THIRD OPINION

Has a sort of frenzied initial appeal, I suppose, but absolutely nothing else. Staying power rating isn't a percentage, by the way – it's time in seconds.

AW

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ It's cheap
- ▶ Almost pretty graphics

BAD NEWS

- ▶ Rotten collision-detection
- ▶ Boring task

GREEN SCREEN VIEW

Not enormously worse than it is in colour – but how could it be?

AW

GRAPHICS	42%
SONICS	25%
GRAB FACTOR	25%
STAYING POWER	6%
A A RATING	21%

SURPRISE-SURPRISE

Central Solutions, £1.99 cass, keys only

This is a hundred-room arcade adventure in which you have to the find the room in which the banquet you have been invited to is being held. To do this you must find the clues scattered about the playing area.

SECOND OPINION

Mastertronic's success seems to be drawing a lot of other people to produce budget software on the Amstrad. Unfortunately this particular product is the sort that brings the prophets of computer doom out of the chip work predicting market slumps. It's best swept under a circuit board somewhere and forgotten about.

BW

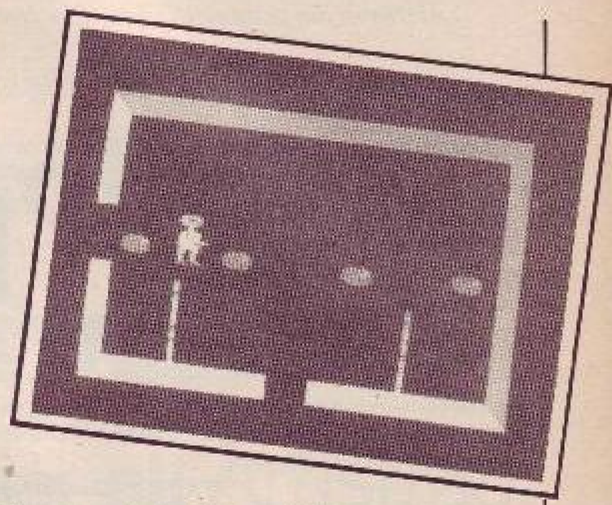
Unfortunately the game just does not come up to scratch. The figure you control is graphically primitive and the rooms are peopled by objects from long-deceased computer games – fireballs, geometrical figures etc. It's all very dull indeed. I just wish my invitation hadn't been delivered.

PC

THIRD OPINION

Not worth £2? It isn't worth the loading time. I mean, forget it.

AW



The only surprise about this game is that it can be so bad.

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ I'll have to get back to you on this one.

BAD NEWS

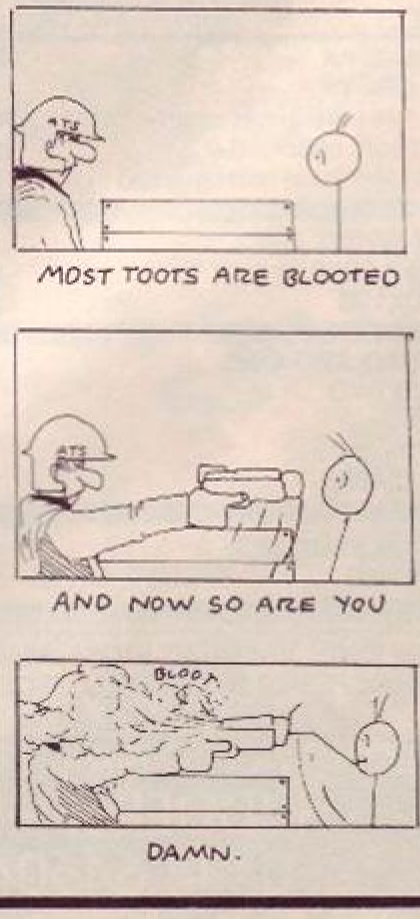
- ▶ We've seen it all before – and better.

GREEN SCREEN VIEW

It wouldn't load on our 6128. Moral – buy a 6128.

AW

GRAPHICS	12%
SONICS	12%
GRAB FACTOR	8%
STAYING POWER	9%
A A RATING	10%



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BLOCKBUSTERS
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BLOCKBUSTERS GOLD RUN
Macsen, £9.95 cass, keys only

Quiz game fiends can really go to town with these two little gems. They've got the nauseating theme tune, the tacky logo, even a picture of Bob Holness on the inlay – what more could you ask for?

Blockbusters, in case you didn't know, is a quiz show produced by Central and broadcast throughout the ITV regions. It's a combination general knowledge and board game, the object being to form a line of lettered hexagons from one side of the board to the other, or from top to bottom.

SECOND OPINION

As I've said before in these pages – and as I'll doubtless say again – I like a good quiz. I don't think Blockbusters falls in to that category; some of the questions are reasonably intriguing, but there aren't that many of them. And the game format I found a bore.

PC

The quiz aspect comes in actually getting each hexagon – to do this, you must answer a question correctly. The question takes the form of a clue, the answer to which has the letter in the hexagon as its first letter. All questions are open to both players – the first player to press his key has the first chance to answer. The questions are printed up quite slowly, and can be interrupted by either player pressing his key. However, interruption stops Arnold from printing out the remainder of the question, so you'll have to answer on the basis of what you already have. If you answer correctly you'll get the hexagon, plus the choice of the next hexagon to be played for – if not, the whole question is passed over to your opponent.

THIRD OPINION

As a two player game this isn't too bad since a contest might get quite exciting. You'll probably have to be a fan of the TV series for that to happen though since quiz shows on computer are always pointless because there are no prizes. Interesting questions for a while but the game format rapidly palls.

BW

That, as far as *Blockbusters* the computer game is concerned, is pretty much it. The TV show groups these two-player games in threes and has a single-player extra round for the winner of the group. This extra round is, of course, the *Gold Run*. Here, you must form a line of hexagons again, but this time your opponent is the clock – also, if you're really interested, the questions take a slightly different form.

This is meant, I think, to be good family entertainment. If so, it's a pretty strong example of why computer family entertainment doesn't work – these games are dull and limited. The harder skill settings only serve to test typing speed – there is just no way to vary the game at all. The questioning mechanism is less than wonderful – it can spot minor misspellings and give you a second chance, but it won't accept plural if it's expecting a singular. As for overall programming, that's not too hot either – *Gold Run* in particular is prone to crashing in normal use.

Quiz games on cassette are, in general, a waste of effort – these two certainly are. It's not just that the questions are few in number and take a long time to load – to make matters worse you need an extra program, at £5.95 if you please, to write some of your own.

I suppose it'll sell to hardened *Blockbusters* fanatics, but for me it lacks the one essential of the TV program – the way you can turn over and watch *Charles In Charge* instead. Now *there's* a game idea...

AW

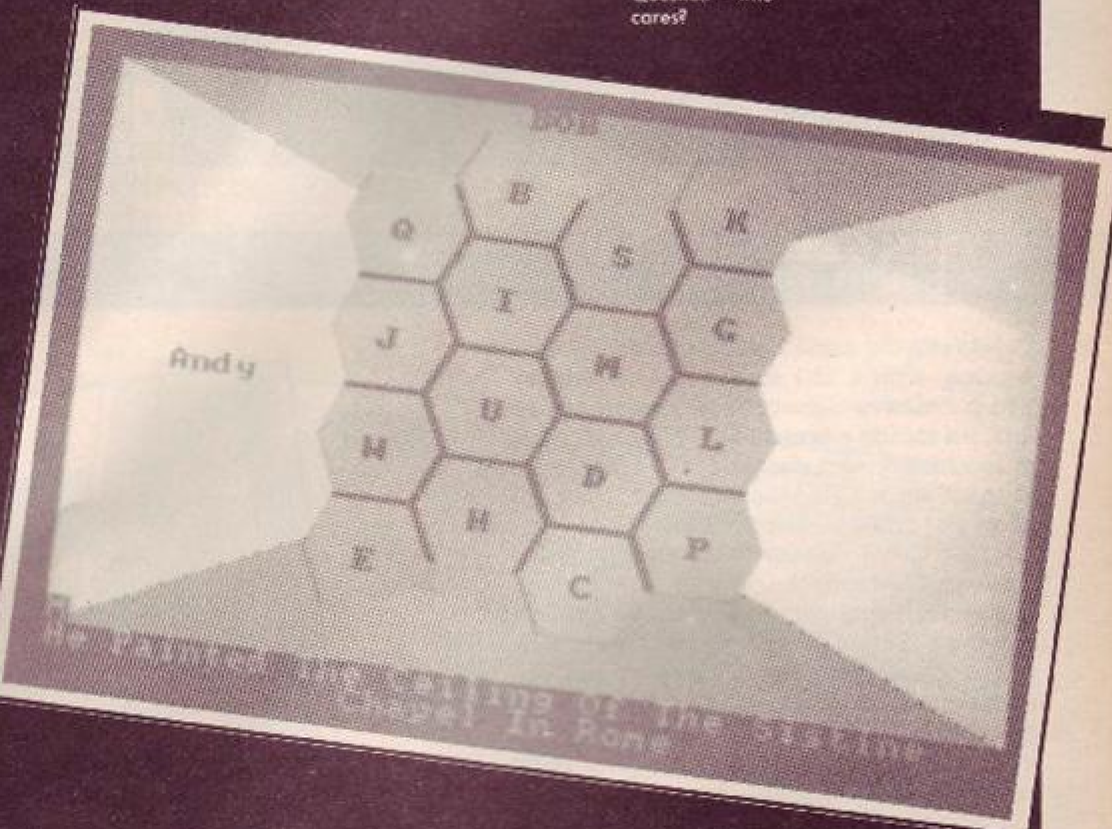
GOOD NEWS

▶ **Picture of Bob Holness on the inlay.**

BAD NEWS

▶ **Very dull.**
▶ **Expensive.**
▶ **Can't hold both game sections in memory at once.**

GRAPHICS	16%
SONICS	18%
GRAB FACTOR	21%
STAYING POWER	11%
A A RATING	14%



Answer – Michelangelo. Question – who cares?

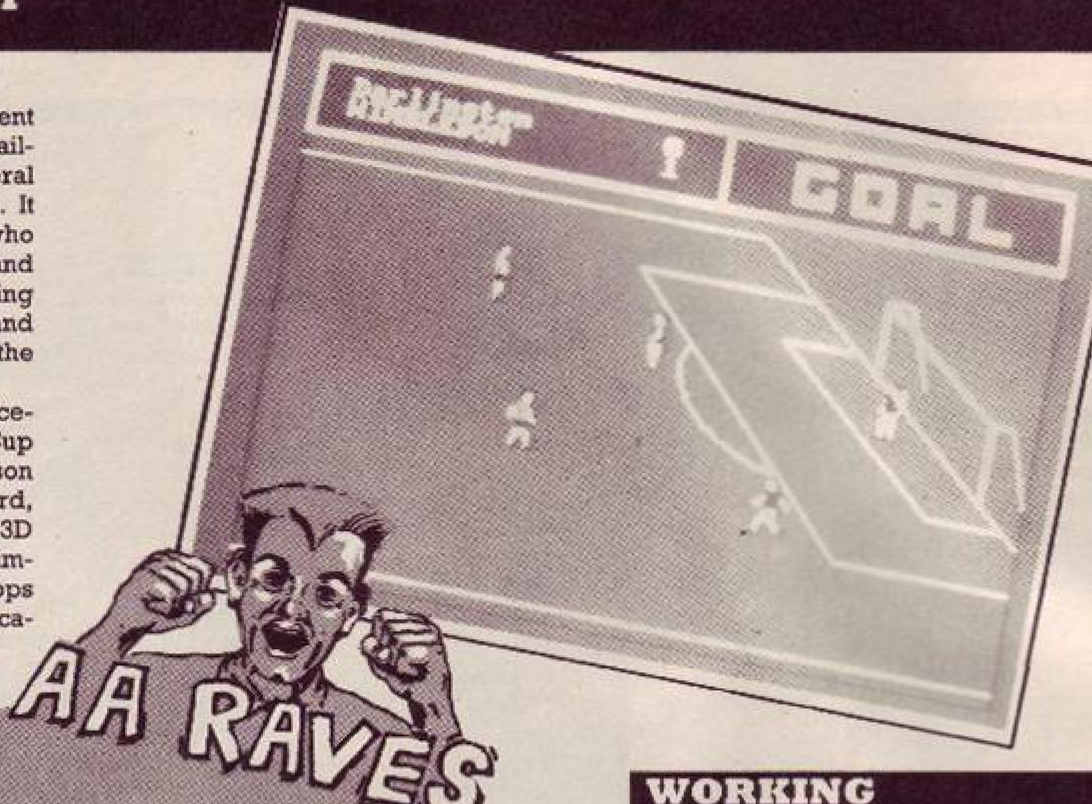
GREEN SCREEN VIEW

Perfectly clear – there's a green screen option.

AW

BIG LEAGUE SOCCER II

Viper, £12.95 disk, keys only



This is the best of the football management simulations on the market and now it's available in disk form it has been given several enhancements that make it even better. It places you in the role of a team manager who starts with his team in the fourth division and has to take them through each game handling team selection, transfers, club finances and then watching the nail-biting highlights as the games are played.

The disk version has a number of noticeable improvements. There is now an FA Cup competition that runs throughout the season and contributes to your managerial record, featuring all the rounds and replays. The 3D highlights of each game have also been improved with different strips available (hoops and stripes), penalties which are saved occasionally and much faster animated action.

Disk Plus

This month sees the release of three-disk based games that reflect the growing importance of disk software in the Amstrad market. All three are connected to previous tape-based games but feature significant improvements in either content or value that make them worth that little bit more.

Strangeloop Plus **is the same basic game as the one we Raved in issue 4 but has an extra section added on,** ***Big League Soccer II*** **is an enhanced version of the game Raved in issue three and** ***Working Backwards*** **is a compilation of four Design Design games – including one previously unreleased.**

WORKING BACKWARDS

Design Design, £14.95 disk, joystick or keys

This compilation features *Dark Star, Tankbusters, On the Run* and the previously unreleased *Halls of the Things*. The four games together represent fantastic value and anybody in search of fast, addictive action should look no further.

Dark Star is a space shoot-em-up where you have to liberate planets from the oppressing forces. It features stunning graphics both in space and on the planet surfaces with enemy ships and towers to blast, force-fields and hyperspace tunnels to fly through. Fast action with a tough long term task. (Rave ratings in issue 1).

Tankbusters is another fast moving

STRANGELOOP PLUS

Amsoft/Virgin, £13.95 disk, joystick or keys

This is still the same basic game as the tape version, with a 250 screen hi-tech factory which you have to shut down by completing a difficult arcade adventure. The factory is full of machinery and dangers that have to be avoided while trying to solve puzzles that will allow you into the control room.

The hero makes his way between screens either on foot or on a jet cycle and will encounter three general types of objects: moving ones that may prove instantly fatal or just produce slow leaks in his space suit, objects that replenish his oxygen, suit patches, gun charges and fuel, and objects that appear in a "pocket" and have to be used to solve puzzles.

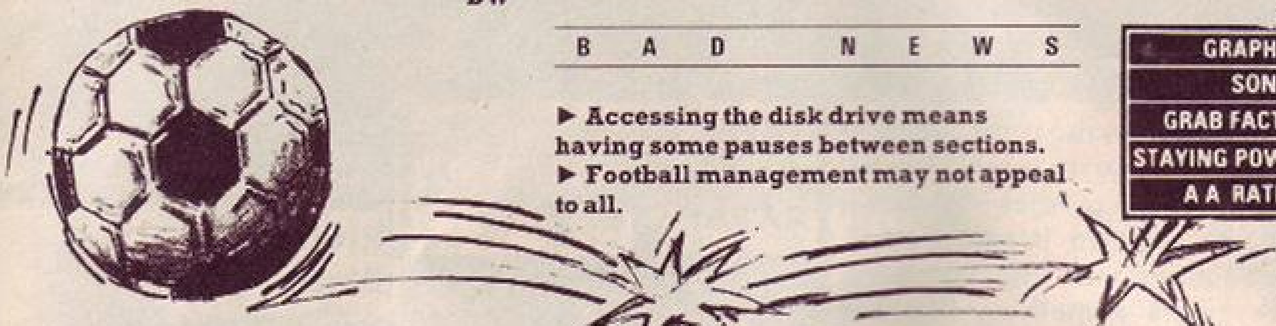
The puzzles will take some little while to work out but there is no lack of things to do or see while you're struggling with them. The disk version differs in only one respect to the cassette and that is that there is an extra section added on. We won't tell you where or what it is – that would spoil the surprise. But you'll need to find it to complete the game and it will be a real thrill when you do.

BW



After a game there is also additional club news that can be good or bad financially. Another improvement is the ability to keep the team that played in a previous game and not have to reselect it every time. All these features add to the excitement and depth of the game with the only drawback being the added time that accessing the disk drive puts onto the game. If you're a football fan this is a must. If you're not, give it a look anyway.

BW



GOOD NEWS

- **Long seasons of 42 games.**
- **FA Cup competition.**
- **Good, fast moving 3D highlights.**
- **Best football management simulation on the market.**
- **Penalties have been introduced to add to match tension.**

BAD NEWS

- **Accessing the disk drive means having some pauses between sections.**
- **Football management may not appeal to all.**

GRAPHICS	64%
SONICS	15%
GRAB FACTOR	87%
STAYING POWER	86%
A A RATING	85%

shoot-em-up based on the arcade game *Battlezone*. You trundle around a planet surface in your tank searching for enemy tanks to blast into pieces. Brilliant vector graphics and a nice option where you can take a missile's-eye-view of things. (Rave ratings in issue 1).

On the Run is a beautiful exploration game featuring some wonderful scenery and characters. There are lots of large, colourful creatures that can be shot by the jet-packed hero as he flies around the maze of screens. He's searching for six chemical flasks and although it's not much of a mental challenge it's great to look at and provides some testing reflex action. (79% rating in issue two)

Halls of the Things is previously unreleased on the Amstrad but has only been thrown in as a bonus. It's a very tough and fast-moving game that falls down a bit on the graphics, but as part of this compilation it makes a nice sweetener. There's lots of exploring to do around a large maze with plenty of objects to pick up and use and things to kill.

BW

GRAPHICS	N/A
SONICS	N/A
GRAB FACTOR	95%
STAYING POWER	93%
A A RATING	93%

GOOD NEWS

- **Two rave games plus two others on one disk.**
- **A real bargain at this price.**
- **Some very entertaining options and instructions.**
- ***Halls of the Things* is previously unreleased.**
- **Some of the fastest, addictive action around.**

BAD NEWS

- **May not all be to your taste.**

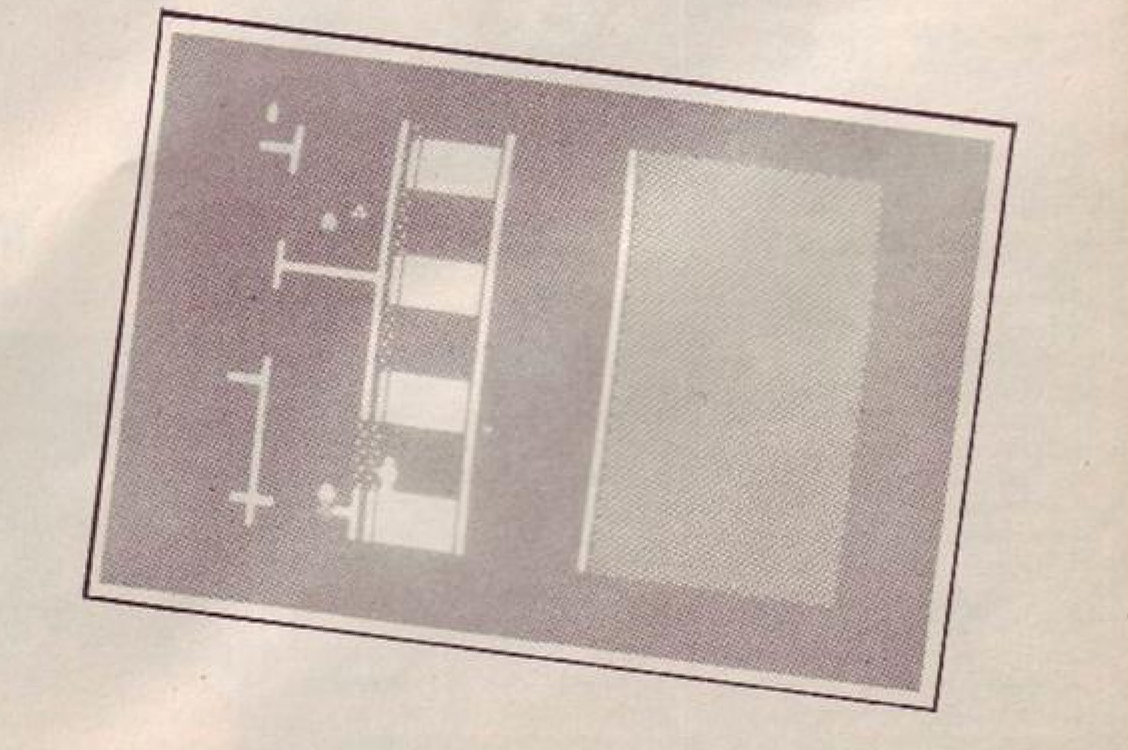
GOOD NEWS

- **250 great graphic rooms.**
- **Lots of tough puzzles to solve.**
- **Good mixture of arcade and adventure.**
- **Fun new section to surprise you.**
- **Will keep you hooked and guessing for ages.**

BAD NEWS

- **Some unlovely colour clash.**
- **Pause when flipping between screens.**

GRAPHICS	91%
SONICS	44%
GRAB FACTOR	88%
STAYING POWER	95%
A A RATING	92%



VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

As you'd expect, *Elite* has drawn the most response of late – and all of it favourable. Obviously it was played before the bug got loose. A dissenting voice – at last – on *Ricochet*, from Blaby. We thought it was rotten, David Baxter of Carluke in Scotland was impressed.

Remember to keep the style something like our Second and Third Opinions – snappy, and to the point. Please send your comments on a postcard or the back of an envelope to: *Voice of the People, Amstrad Action, The Old Barn, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS.*

ELITE
Firebird
AA Rating 94%

Not very often do games appear which render you utterly senseless. *Elite* is undoubtedly the most superior piece of software available for the CPC range. It is totally absorbing; it creates a situation where you feel involved. It has incredible staying power. Most games become shelf-candidates in a week or two, but with *Elite* I'm worrying about the tape rotting before I become bored.
Cameron Kane, Glasgow

This is THE best game I have ever played! It is absolutely brilliant. The vector graphics are astounding, sound is pretty good and lasting interest is 100% in my opinion. Itt's also brilliantly presented. All in all – the ELite of games!
Simon O'Connell, Sidcup

Now I know why they call this the most original game ever produced. The graphics are magnificent – I would love to know how they do the hidden line vectors. The trading bits are great as well. This is the first piece of games software that lives up to its hype. Why do other companies go for graphics but poor gameplay? With *Elite* you get the best of both worlds – great gameplay and story-line coupled with fantastic graphics. Give us more like this Firebird!
John Gigney, Chelmsford

As a space shoot-em-up *Elite* is good but not brilliant. The trading aspect and vast scenario are what make this a winner. One word of warning – docking at space stations can seriously damage your health!
Gerry Hughes, Cranleigh

SPITFIRE 40
Mirrorsoft
AA Rating 68%

Lack of detailed graphics for the ground and lack of variety of enemy aircraft tend to spoil an otherwise playable simulator. Make sure your copy actually works with a joystick. Confusing gyro is also a problem, but a worthwhile game nonetheless.
Simon Carter

LORD OF THE RINGS
Melbourne House
Pilgrim Rating 85%

This surprised me. The graphics are not good, but they are adequate for what they represent. The responsse is slow, but for the size of adventure this is to be expected. I like the fact that you can choose the number of characters you wish to play before you actually begin the adventure.

The only niggle that I have is that when you fail you have to reload the data for the beginning.
John Gigney, Chelmsford

SKYFOX
Ariolasoft
AA Rating 81%

Decent graphics, all right sound, stacks of features etc. BUT, it lacks those cries of 'Cool!', 'Just one more game!' when played after a few goes. In other words, it gets BORING! All the same, not a bad game.
Simon O'Connell, Sidcup

If you feel like a change from all those arcade adventures and sports simulations then this is well worth a look. Excellent graphics and blasting action.
Gerry Hughes, Cranleigh

RICOCHET
Blaby
AA Rating 18%

A game you will either love or hate. AA seemed to hate it, but anyone that I've spoken to thinks it's great. So the graphics aren't the best you've ever seen, but the gameplay makes up for that. It has plenty of options to add to the fun and at the price it's a wise buy.
David Baxter, Carluke

THEIR ONLY HOPE WAS YOUR PROMISE TO BRING THEM BACK ALIVE....

BEACH-HEAD II



The continuing saga pits allied forces against the cruel dictator who escaped the destruction of the fortress with remnants of his army and prisoners captured during the land battle.

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A couple of nearly-completed games looked so good this month that we thought we should whet your appetites with an AA preview. *Knight Games* is a medieval bash-em-up from English Software – their first venture into the Amstrad market.

***Meltdown* comes from Alligata – whose *Who Dares Wins II* we raved last month – and features 192 rooms of arcade adventure.**

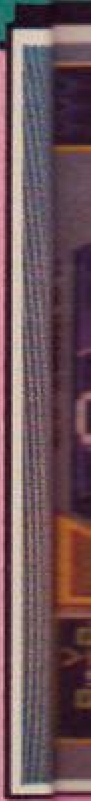
MELTDOWN
Alligata

Here's a game to make 6128 owners drool – and sneer at the poor old 464ers. Why? Because *Meltdown* for the 6128 will contain 192 rooms, and for the 464 only 64. Well, that's life.

It's an arcade adventure in the 3D rooms mould, but with lots of added extras – such as excellent speech. Your task as hero Bail Bond is to shut down a rogue reactor threatening to fry everyone and everything. Easier said than done.

Each of the game's 8x8 levels contains six computers. You have to find them, log on, and get all six passwords before making progress. Finding your way round the layout is intriguing enough in itself, but the rooms are also stuffed full of obstacles and sprinkled with hostile robots. Shoot-em-uppers will be pleased to hear that you can waste the robots with your laser gun.

Meltdown's speech really is very impressive – clearly the best produced so far on the Amstrad. When you reach a terminal the computer invites you to 'Log on, please', and



Knight Games
English Software

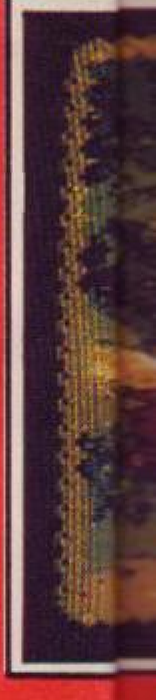
Tired of Daley Thompson? Can't take any more Kung Fu? Then *Knight Games* should make a refreshing change for combat-action freaks. It's a visually stunning set of combat games set in Merrie Olde England that has you chopping, slashing and bashing your way through eight almost chivalrous events. English Software have picked a date around the 11th century. Graphics and action are all very authentic, except for a fluttering Union Jack – which is pretty enough for us not to worry about.

The eight events are two different Swordfights, Crossbow, Quarterstaff, Ball and Chain, Archery, Pike Staff and Axeman. Although the only one fully playable at the time of our preview was the first Swordfight, they *all* look like potential crackers. Animation is excellent, with a full range of movements, and backgrounds – produced by Colin Brown with the help of Beebugsoft's *Rembrandt* – are exceptionally attractive and detailed.

The two iron-clad swordfighters have a range of eight very nasty moves to choose from, including stabs, uppercuts and head-cleaving overarm swings. Shields provide protection from some of these, but anticipating the opponent's moves is a skill apprentice knights could take some time to acquire. Battle is accompanied by various atmospheric noises depending on where the blow lands, and an excellent funky-medieval soundtrack written by two gents who wish to be known as Spiz and Yekow.

Crossbow – the archer takes aim at the spinning targets in the distance.





Of the other events, Axeman and Crossbow look particularly interesting. In the first of these the two characters chop it out on the banqueting hall's goblet-strewn table, while in the second the targets spin wickedly in the breeze. 'Twill need sharp vision to hit ye bull's eye.

Knight Games has all the elements of an exciting game – furious action, superb graphics and animation, good music and a true two-player option. Programmer Dennis Travers doesn't have far to go before completion, so look out for a full review next month.



later asks 'Do you want to play a game?'

If you take up the offer you'll go into one of the many sub-games available. At the moment these are mainly of a brain-teasing nature, but in the final version Alligata hope to have a few more arcade games.

One section of the game should have particularly strong appeal for fans of *Spitting Image*'s vitriolic humour. It's a platform game entitled *The President's Brain is Missing*, and includes such features as bottles of Grecian 2000 hair rejuvenator, Bonzo the monkey and a 'nuke level' rather than energy status.

Meltdown is not yet finished, but all the signs are that it will be not just big, but entertaining and engrossing. With any luck, programmer Ross Goodley should have it completed in time for a review in the next issue.

Bail Bond finds himself in one of *Meltdown's* 192 rooms. Terminal is in the corner.



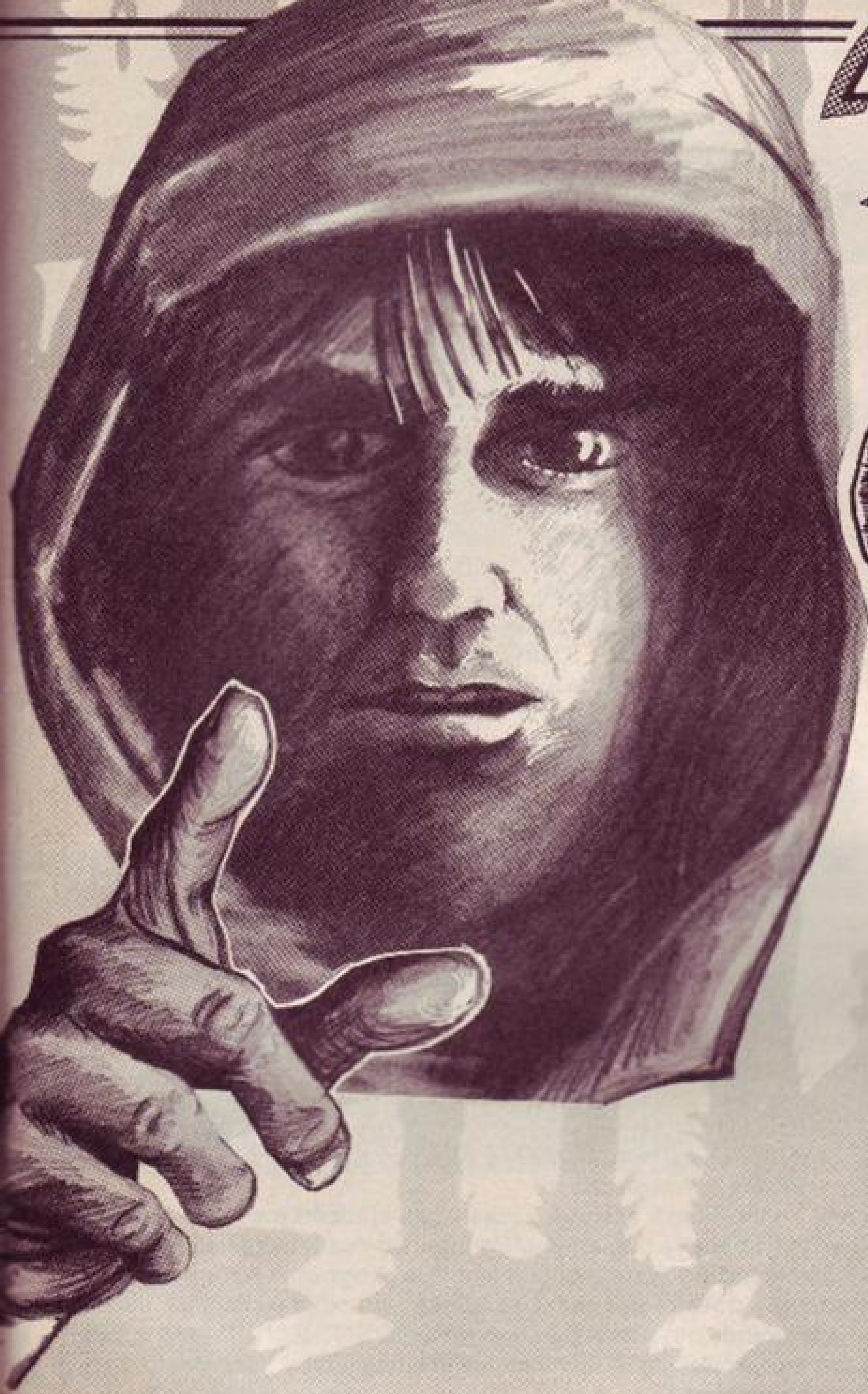
Quarterstaff – the two rascals fight it out for possession of the log.



A spot of friendly ball-and-chaining by the portcullis.


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ADVENTURE



Howdy, Pilgs! This month sees the Cowled Crusader getting up to no good in the local girls school, slopping around in the Gents Toilet in *The Beer Hunter*, and settling a few old scores in a new game that's just about to hit the streets. There's also news of some adventures sent in by readers (including the first ever to use Incentive's *GAC* adventure creator utility). And if that's not enough, you can transfer *Red Moon* to disc, read your letters, and indulge in a good bout of Clue Sniffing!

The Beer Hunter

Global Software, £7.95 cass

This is the first commercial game release to land on the Pilgrim's doorstep that uses Incentive's *Graphics Adventure Creator*. There have already been many successful games released using *The Quill* (*Terrormolinos* and *Subsunk* for example), so the Pilg was eager to see how Global and *GAC* got on together.

The storyline of *The Beer Hunter* revolves around – predictably – drink. The luckless adventurer will have to make his way from one social blackspot to another, and the opportunities for observing other members of the human race in varying degrees of stupefaction and degeneracy are many. You even start the game in the toilet, and can only proceed in the game by first pulling the chain.

There have been a number of adventures recently (*Terrormolinos*, again, is the obvious example) that have attempted to show us the middle-class way of life, warts and all, and *Beer Hunter* is firmly in that tradition. This is a world of Escort XR3i's and pretentious winebars – definitely a far cry from Middle Earth. You make your way from the pub to the final scene via an amusement arcade, El Gringo's Wine Bar, the Barbican, and a magistrate's court.

The trouble with choosing this sort of 'everyday-life' scenario for an adventure is that to make it gripping/amusing/suspenseful or whatever, you have to have a very well-developed sense of program design. The Pilg felt that although *The Beer Hunter* was quite competently put together, there was a slight lack of spark. Yes, some of the locations were quite amusing, and there were one or two amusing take-offs of the traditional adventure, but I neither fell off my seat laughing at any time, nor gripped it in suspense. A pity, but then much of adventuring is a purely personal thing and others may well find it more to their liking.

Unfortunately *The Beer Hunter* suffers from some rather annoying programming features. The copy sent to The Pilgrim was not a production copy, however, so it is conceivable that the program has not yet been duplicated, in which case I may prevail upon Global to rectify some, if not all, of the programming deficiencies.

For example, the most serious drawback is the program's method of scrolling. Text is displayed at the bottom of the screen beneath the graphics, and when a longish description is being printed, the program whips the text up the window and out of sight in a split-second, and usually before you've had a chance to read it. The solution is to type TEXT, and leave out the pictures altogether, but this is only a compromise and something has to be done about it.



The next drawback is that the program simply ignores words it doesn't understand, and redisplays the input prompt. This is a pity – it makes a lot of difference to a game if the level of commu-

nicaiton between the program and the player is kept as high as possible, and reporting errors is just part of that communication. The less communication, the less feeling of involvement. Also, what responses there are tend to be extremely brief.

Finally, a word to all programmers of adventure games. *The Beer Hunter* occasionally uses ink colours for the text that do not display on a green screen Arnold. This is criminal, and must be avoided at all costs. I can't enjoy a game that I can't read.

The Beer Hunter is, I suspect, the first of many *GAC* programs. It's a reasonable effort, but goes to show one thing – the whole point of using adventure generators is to free the programmer to concentrate on design and plot. If you fall down on those two points, then all you'll have left will be a program that looks like dozens of others and doesn't even have uniqueness to recommend it. Thankfully, *The Beer Hunter* isn't by any standard near to that dismal category, but it does alert one to the depressing possibilities of *GAC* as a program that could encourage the production of a load of cloned codswallop.



THE SECRET OF ST. BRIDE'S

Audiogenic/St. Bride's, £6.95 cass

This game has a rather strange background which will either excite you, intrigue you, or simply mystify you.

There is, apparently, a place in Ireland called St Bride's School for Girls which – and I kid you not – is run like a real school, but exists for the entertainment of adults. In other words, wicked women go their for holidays in an attempt to relive their mis-spent youth. It all sounds too outrageous for words, and the Pilg is wondering if he shouldn't shave his beard and don a dress in the hope of penetrating this den of iniquity to bring you all the low-down.

Anyway, all this is beside the point, because Priscilla Langridge and her companions at the aforesaid 'school' have decided to enter the adventure game market, and their first product is a Quilled game called *The Secret of St Bride's*. It has you as a jolly-hockey-stick wielding young lady who has gone to St Bride's for a holiday, only to discover that all is not as meets the eye.

For example, YOU know it's 1985, but the other young ladies seem to be convinced it's about 50 years earlier. In fact, these young ladies are playing the St Bride's game in deadly earnest. Can you escape to the sanity of the present day and avoid the clutches of the headmistress who, horrors!, practises hypnotism and is very definitely on the side of the enemy.

This game has all the faults and virtues of a Quilled release. It's slow, lacking in vocabulary, occasionally very difficult to solve without a hint or two, but also totally original, often amusing, and definitely a game for anyone who fancies a lark or two. Grab your hockey stick and join in the fun...

MANSION

Central Solutions, £1.99 cass

There are already a number of budget adventures on the market – most notably the Quilled series of games from Eighth Day that the Pilg wrote about a couple of months back. Now a company called Central Solutions has joined the fray with a whole bevy of games retailing for £1.99.

The first thing about these games is that they are NOT Quilled games, but (I reckon) BASIC efforts. I've only seen one so far, *Mansion*, and believe me, BASIC is the word that springs to mind.

First, the plot. In *Mansion*'s case, this is pretty basic – you must recover a large jewel from a stately home. Very original, I must say. I can remember at least one other game with an identical theme.

Next, the vocabulary. This is also of the basic variety – basically, you get very few words that you would expect and welcome. Words like LOOK are not understood, nor is EXAMINE. You can get things, of course, and even perform one or two other unusual commands, but don't expect much help from the vocabulary.

The program itself is also, well, basic. You get a room description at the top of the screen, and right down the bottom you get a prompt for your input. Each time you hit the ENTER key, the program BEEPs importantly and flashes up its response. The response is usually one of the following:

Eh?
I THINK you're talking a load of rubbish.
What are you on about?

And so on. There are other messages of incomprehension to be had, and believe me, after a few minutes you'll have had them all. Understanding your inputs is not this program's strong point. It certainly doesn't get as far as telling you which word it doesn't understand, but since it falls over LOOK, EXAMINE, and other common commands, the chances are that it may not have understood anything.

So does this little gem have anything at all to recommend it? Well, the first thing is that there are enough locations to give a reasonable scenario upon which the action can take place. Unfortunately there isn't that much action, but you can't have everything, can you? There are a couple of nice touches – the room descriptions will occasionally vary according to where you've come from. Enter the corridor from a bedroom and the program will tell you that 'You leave the room to find yourself in the corridor...', whereas if you move from one section of the corridor to another, it will say 'You continue along the corridor'. Let's face it, these are not the sort of things that best-selling games are made of.

And what does the Pilg make of all this? Well, on balance, I'm inclined to think that, at 1.99p, these games are seriously overpriced...

THESEUS

Anthony Collins

The Pilg makes a point of trying to mention readers' games on a regular basis. This month I received a copy of *Theseus* from Anthony Collins in Birmingham, and I was particularly interested in it since it was the first game I had seen written using Incentive's *GAC*.

Although Anthony's game is not yet complete, it still manages to show just what can be done using *GAC*. The game looks and feels professional, and the graphics are sometimes well up to the standard we've come to expect from other more commercial outlets.

However, the real nitty-gritty of a game is in the playing, and here Anthony's game shows a few weaknesses. First, the descriptions of the various objects are rather short and tend not to tell you much more about the objects concerned. A lamb is 'a small lamb', a

tube is 'hollow and long', and so forth. It's worth giving more detail following an 'Examine object' command as this tends to keep the player interested and helps the atmosphere.



The other problem, and this is one that many adventure designers get into trouble over, is that of dying. Anthony soon kills off his adventurer by starving him to death, and although the answer is not far away there are at least four other death threats within the first fifteen locations. Furthermore, these threats are time-linked, in that entering a location too often (or remaining there too long) will result in your untimely demise.

All this means that the first few times you play the game you are certain to die within a couple of minutes unless you're particularly clever, and this can be very discouraging for a player. I'm inclined to think that one should be able to explore at least twenty locations of a game before getting into too deep water, though this is of course a Pilg-personal opinion. Scott Adams, for example, tries to get rid of you a dozen times before you've even hit the ENTER key!

I look forward to seeing Anthony's game in its finished version – the story-line (although lifted from Ancient Greek legends) is gripping and authentic. If the vocabulary were to be enlarged a bit (how about praying in the temple?) and the beginning of the game made a bit more friendly, I have no doubt that it will be a reasonably popular game.

	Atmosphere	Interaction	Challenge	AA Rating
THE BEER HUNTER	65%	60%	67%	62%
THE SECRET OF ST. BRIDE'S	72%	60%	68%	62%
MANSION	35%	22%	41%	41%

A Pilg Preview!

OLD SCORES

Global Software, £7.95 cass

The Pilg published a screenshot of *Old Scores* a few issues back, with the promise of more news to come. I've held off because the game still isn't finished, but I really do think it's going to be very impressive. Here's a brief update...

The one things about *Old Scores* is that it shows both excellent game design and competent programming. Like most of the best games, the program has its own unique operating system developed by the author and does not rely on an adventure generator. The program supports complex input, specifies misunderstood words, toggles between 80 and 40 column mode, has attractive graphics, and even boasts music at selected locations.

The game is set on London's South Bank and the different locations have obviously been carefully researched because they relate directly to existing buildings that many Londoners and visitors to London will be familiar with. You can visit the National Theatre, see the Hayward Gallery, and wander around the South Bank complex just as in real life. You can even hear the musicians playing in the National Theatre foyer.

The plot involves the recovery of three stolen treasures: an original Mozart manuscript (hence the title, and the music in the game is also by Mozart), a Henry Moore sculpture, and a painting by Picasso. Author Pete Green says 'There are over 220 real locations in the game, but when I first mapped it out I saw that many of these locations could not serve any useful purpose unless there was more than one objective in the game – hence the three treasures which must be recovered...'. It's good to see someone giving careful thought to the construction of their game, and the Pilg reckons that Mr Green has it in him to come up with some pretty high-class stuff.

Other attractions in this program include a visit to the IBM building and some meaningful interaction with a big IBM computer, a spot of petty theft, and a British Rail strike. All this and more shall the Pilg reveal as soon as the game is finished. It's just possible that it will be in the shops as you read this, but in any case keep an eye open for it – it's a winner.



Pretty, eh? The Pilg can't wait to get to grips with the finished version of Global's *Old Scores.*

ADVENTURE

The Pilgrim Peeks... The Pilgrim Pokes...

Red Moon on Disc!

Many thanks this month to Cpl D M Bradford of Catterick Garrison for the following tips on transferring *Red Moon* to disc. "I'm afraid game progress still has to be saved to tape," he warns, but I'll give my method anyway:

```
|TAPE:MEMORY &99FF:LOAD "ADVENTUR" (ENTER)
Remove Red Moon Tape and put clean tape in recorder and
prepare to save
SAVE "ADVENT",B,&9A00,3194(ENTER)
Rewind saved tape and reset computer
|TAPE.IN:|DISC.OUT:LOAD "ADVENT" (ENTER)
SAVE "ADVENT",B,&9A00,319
Replace original Red Moon tape
MEMORY &4000:LOAD "BIT-1" (ENTER)
SAVE "BIT1",B,&4600,&5100(ENTER)
LOAD "BIT2" (ENTER)
SAVE "BIT2",B,&6700,&32FF (ENTER)
Reset computer and type in following listing, then SAVE it as
"redmoon"

10 MEMORY &15FF
20 LOAD "advent.bin",&9A00
30 LOAD "bit1",&1600
40 LOAD "bit2
50 |TAPE
60 FOR A=0 TO 1416
70 POKE &A67A+A,0
80 NEXT
90 FOR A=0 TO 128
100 READ D$
110 E$="&"+D$
120 C=VAL(E$)
130 POKE &AB80+A,C
140 NEXT
150 CALL -23284
160 DATA
18,3C,7E,FF,18,18,18,18,18,18,18,18,FF,7E,3C,18,10,30,70,FF,FF
,70,30,10
170 DATA
08,0C,0E,FF,FF,0E,0C,08,00,00,18,3C,7E,FF,FF,00,00,00,FF,FF
,7E,
EC,18,00
180 DATA
80,E0,F8,FE,F8,E0,80,00,02,0E,3E,FE,3E,0E,02,00,38,38,92,7C,10
,
28,28,28
190 DATA
38,38,10,FE,10,28,44,82,38,38,12,7C,90,28,24,22,38,38,90,7C,12,
28,48,88
200 DATA
00,3C,18,3C,3C,3C,18,00,3C,FF,FF,18,0C,18,30,18,18,3C,7E,18,1
8,
7E,3C,18
210 DATA 00,24,66,FF,66,24,00,00,00
```

I haven't had a chance to check this routine myself, but many thanks Corp. Bradford – I'm sure that there will be many grateful Red Mooners singing your praises. Don't forget, Pilgs, if you've got a useful adventure utility then please pop it in the post to me. It helps if you can send it to me on tape or disc, as this saves typing out the listing, which can introduce errors where they are least wanted.

Bugs Hunting



Mike Kelly has been on safari, and brings us news of the following bug sightings in *Lord of the Rings*: "Having finished the first part, I set about saving to tape the end of the game, to load into cassette two. Unfortunately the SAVE didn't work and of course wiped out the tape. I then stuck my head in the oven for an hour, but I'm afraid it's electric! Thus with suicidal thoughts I commenced cassette two (apparently it is possible without the end from part one).

Again, if you try to move or LOOK in the dark the program crashes. Also, on occasion, when asking some of the characters to give me an object, the object disappeared from the game completely! I should add that this doesn't happen very often, but it's frustrating when it does, especially if you forget to do an INVEN and save the game."

Sounds like good hunting in *Lord of the Rings*, then. But I think Richard Foley is having a little too much trouble with his version of *The Hobbit*: "If Fred Gourlay (see last issue) can keep his copy of the *The Hobbit* playing for half an hour, he must be lucky. I can't even play the thing for more than ten minutes before it crashes..."

Hmmm..That doesn't sound like a bug to me, Richard, it sounds like a faulty copy. I suspect that your cassette isn't loading properly, and I advise you to get in touch with Melbourne House for a replacement. You could also try checking that your tape head is clean and properly aligned. I know *The Hobbit's* got it's share of bugs, but I think your copy sounds distinctly dodgy!

Call the Pilgrim!

The Pilgrim can be contacted c/o Amstrad Action, The Old Barn, Somerton, Somerset, TA11 7PS. If you have a modem, then you can get me on Micronet/Prestel – my mailbox number is 919994854. You can also contact me on Telecom Gold at 83:JNL251.

However, and this is a BIG 'however', I cannot answer individual cries for help. The Pilgrim does his best to keep up with the volumes of correspondence he receives daily, but there simply isn't time to help on an individual basis. If you're stuck in a game then check out the Lords of Adventure column, where there is bound to be a brave Pilg who can render more timely assistance than I.

The Pilg is, however, always interested to hear from readers on any subject to do with adventures and will include your letters in the column whenever space permits.



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PILGRIM'S POST

The Pilgrim has been deluged with post this month. First out of the bag was a desperate letter from Carla Fowler who has been having trouble in *Classic Adventure*. "What exactly is the connection between *Classic Adventure* and *Colossal Adventure/Cave*? Do the same tips apply for either because they sound very much alike?" she asks.

Well, as a general rule the puzzles in all versions of this ancient game tend to have the same (or almost the same) solutions. But there are some crucial differences – especially with regard to how you deal with the snake. The original solution to the snake problem involves the bird, but in one version (I think it's *Classic Adventure*) using the bird will simply get you into trouble!

However, when it comes to words like XYZY, the games differ only slightly, if at all. So, Carla, if you're still wondering what XYZY means, I suggest you try SAYing it in various places and note the effect. the same applies to some of the other strange words you will come across.

Marc Ollosson of Hoddesdon asks "When you review a game, do the companies send you a solution sheet or do you visit as many locations as possible in each adventure before going to press and review what you have seen?". Well, Marc, the Pilgrim does indeed occasionally receive cheat sheets from software companies. If I do, I put the sheet to one side until I've reached a point in the game where I can really get no further. My reviews are always based only on what I have seen of a game, not on what the cheat sheet claims to be the case.

However, cheat sheets are not always forthcoming, and although software companies will usually help a reviewer if he's stuck, you'd be amazed how few companies are actually able to offer such help. Adventures are often written by free-lance programmers who tend to be as difficult to pin down as the solutions to their puzzles.

In fact, I'm glad Marc has raised this point, because it touches on a tricky subject that few other adventure reviewers mention in their columns. It is sometimes the case that one has to review a game without finishing it, and in these cases there is always the chance that the nature of the game will change rapidly at just that point where the reviewer leaves it. The Pilg's promise to you all is that if I feel there is a chance that I may not be able to do a game justice because I haven't finished it, then I shall let you know.

There are, however, certain basic points about adventure programs that become immediately apparent within the first few locations. These are the size of the vocabulary, the 'friendliness' of the program, the intelligence (or otherwise) of the parser, and the style and content of the location descriptions. All these factors are of crucial importance in rating a game, and after you've seen as many games as the Pilg you soon develop an intuitive feeling about a program during the first few minutes. Relying on that intuitive feeling, however, can be dangerous so I can assure you all that I won't give you the low-down on a game unless I've really given it a thorough going-over.

Talking of finishing a game, Owen Davies of Dorking only THINKS he has finished *Lord of the Rings*. "I am undecided on this," he says, "as it seems to end on leaving Lothlorien by river, some two chapters worth of story before the end of the book". Well Owen, as I said myself last month, I still haven't finished the game yet myself. Any *Lords of the Rings* out there who can clear up this uncertainty?

Mrs J Greaves of Felixstowe wonders how you get Mordon to appear in *Mordon's Quest*. Hmmmm... To be honest, the Pilg isn't very clear about this. Whenever I played the game, I found that the old boy turned up when I returned to the house after exploring the neighbourhood. I'm not sure exactly what it is that provokes his appearance, but try going for a wander first, and perhaps even climbing a drain-pipe or two...

Finally, "Where is this month's Clue Pot?!" wails Sue Lewis of Taunton. The Pilg must point out at this juncture that he has no control over the layout and design of these pages. I'm just a humble back-packer with a stout staff who occasionally puts in at a convenient hostel to communicate with his fellow Pilgrims. However, on behalf of the AA design team, I apologise for the occasional absence of otherwise regular features from these pages. Sometimes even the Clue-Pot must give way to make space. Sniff, sniff...

THE LORDS OF ADVENTURE

The Lords of Adventure are nominated each month by the Pilgrim, and should be revered by one and all. It is through their persistence that territories otherwise unpassable have been opened up to the inexperienced traveller. Be grateful for their offers of assistance, oh Pilgrims! And if you're stuck in a game, drop them a line and humbly beg their assistance! And make sure you include an SAE, or I'll set the Balrogs onto you!

If you feel you could join the Lords in offering assistance to those less fortunate or less able than yourself, then write to the Pilgrim (on a post-card, please) stating which games you have completed and giving your name and address.

You can also include a telephone number if you wish. However, bear in mind that you may receive many calls, so make sure you check with other members of your household before publishing your number. You should also remember that adventurers keep strange hours, so don't be surprised if you get desperate calls for help at one o'clock in the morning.



Forest at the Worlds End, Message from Andromeda
Marc Ollosson, 5 Highwood Road, Hoddesdon, Herts, EN11 9AJ

The Hobbit, Fantasia Diamond, Return to Eden, Emerald Isle, Never Ending Story + limited help on Lord of the Rings, Worm in Paradise, Souls of Darkon, and Gremlins
James Adamson, 45 Park Street, Winterton, South Humberside, DN15 9UB Tel: (0472) 732466

Lords of Time, Forest at Worlds End, Heroes of Karn
Ian McDonald, 26 Herbertson Cres., Irvine, Ayrshire, Scotland

All games
Tony Treadwell, 17 Headley Way, Headington, Oxford OX3 0LR Tel: (0865) 68637



Lord of the Pilgs!

Well, it had to happen, didn't it? Last month's 'most wanted game' has rocketed to Number One in the charts only weeks after being on general release. Melbourne House have done it again.

But there's more to this month's charts than meets the eye. First, notice that last month's Number Two, *Forest at the World's End*, has disappeared from the chart altogether. There's a simple reason for this. You may remember that the Pilg was somewhat surprised to see it in the chart at all, but concluded that since it was one of the earlier releases for the Arnold, most people would have it in their collections. It makes sense now that the more recent releases should be making their presence felt, though I expect that *Forest at the World's End* still has quite a bit of life in it.

The other surprise is the popularity this month of *Dungeon Adventure*, a good old fashioned text-only game from Level 9. I think there's every chance that, once readers have been introduced to adventuring through some of the more recent graphics-based games, they will perhaps want to try their hands at some of the classics — and that's no bad thing in the Pilg's opinion, since some of those early games are worth their weight in gold!

This month's winner...

The lucky Pilgrim this month is Jason Grandin, who walks away with a copy of *Red Moon* for his pains. 'Twill be winging its way to you in the post very shortly, Jason, and I hope you enjoy it! 'Tis a truly magical adventure, and well deserves its place in this month's chart.

1	Lord of the Rings	Melbourne House
2	Never Ending Story	Ocean
	The Hobbit	Melbourne House
4	Red Moon	Level 9
5	Return to Eden	Level 9
6	Warlord	Interceptor
7	Hitchikers Guide	Infocom/Softsel
	Dungeon Adventure	Level 9
9	Worm in Paradise	Level 9
10	Heroes of Karn	Interceptor

Clue Sniffing With the Pilgrim

Don't forget — the Pilg is always interested to see games written by readers. But please don't expect me to return your masterpieces unless you enclose a jiffy-bag and adequate postage. All cassettes and discs should be CLEARLY marked and MUST have your name and address on them as well — so I can match up the games with the envelopes!

ERIK THE VIKING
Before boarding the Golden Dragon, make sure you've used the nails, planks, and hammer to good effect.
Erik can carry more, if he's full of beans.

FANTASIA DIAMOND
On your return by boat, Boris goes first!

MINDSHADOW
The London derelict has something to sell
Try Booth 11
Check the wilderness for essential information

WARLORD
Twisted Forest — take on more staff before passing through
Use the rope and spare the Roman

To The Pilgrim.

My favourite three adventures are:

1. Game: ____________ Company: ____________
2. Game: ____________ Company: ____________
3. Game: ____________ Company: ____________

My reasons for putting game number one above as first choice are:

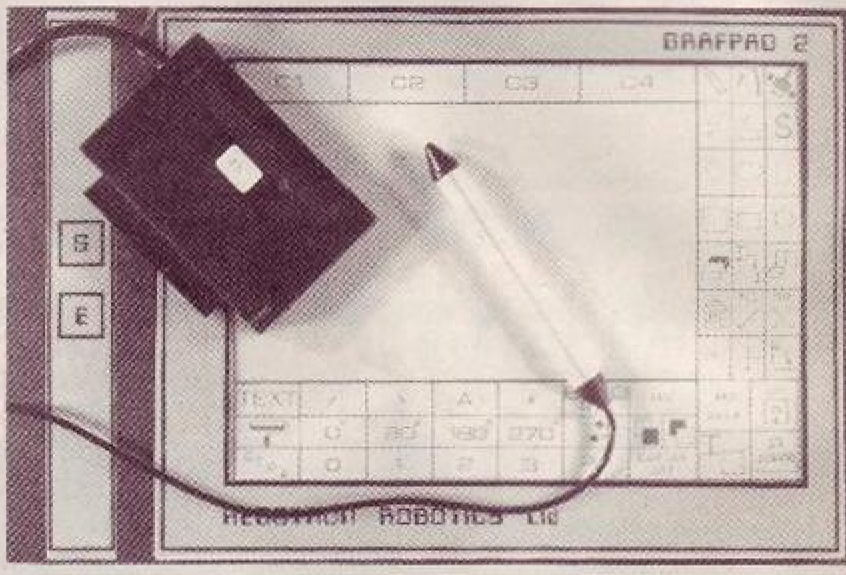
If I'm a lucky Pilgrim and win a free game, I should like to receive a copy of:

My address is (BLOCK CAPITALS ONLY):

GRAFPAD II

Andrew Wilton excercises his artistic talent on Arnold's latest graphics plug-in

What you actually get for your money are the pad itself, the pen, the pad interface and a bundled art program. The pad is a plastic tray large enough to take a sheet of A4 paper as an inlay, and has two pressure switches at the left hand end. Connected to the pad by a short-ish length of cable is the pen, a blunt stylus used for selecting icons on the inlay area, and for the actual drawing. Pad and pen are both light without being flimsy – the whole set-up looks tough enough to stand heavy use – but you could hardly call either of them pleasant to look at.



GRAFPAD II
Grafsales, £69.00 cass, £75.50 disk
CPC 464, 664, 6128

THE HARDWARE

While appearances suggest a comparison with light pens, the pricing of *Grafpad* puts it definitely in mouse territory. As pieces of graphic hardware, there is not much to choose between *Grafpad* and the AMX mouse. *Grafpad* is fussy about your keeping the pen upright and in contact with the pad, and takes up a fair amount of desk space even when not in use. On the plus side however, it uses a fixed amount of space when you are using it, avoiding such mouse problem as running off the edge of the desk. *Grafpad* can also sit on top of the inevitable paperwork, or even on your knees at a pinch.

The other big hardware difference between these two is the method of interfacing. *Grafpad* uses the expansion port, and this certainly provides a stronger connection than the joystick port interface of the AMX. However, there is no through-bus on the *Grafpad* interface, so 464 owners will have problems using a disk drive at the same time. Users of the 6128 may also have difficulties with the interface casing pressing against their machine's 12v cable – an indentation on the casing is meant to overcome this problem, but the review copy still wouldn't fit properly.

THE SOFTWARE

Grafpad comes with the drawing program *Grafpad Art*. As this will be the pad's main or only use for most buyers, it's worth a close look.

The art package's inlay sheet is mostly given over to a drawing area, corresponding to a graphic window on screen. As you move the pen around this section of the pad, the movement is echoed on screen by a gunsight-style cursor – not as much fun as AMX's little spraygun/roller/pencil symbols, but probably more practical. Main functions – freehand drawing, line, fill etc. – are selected from icons around the edge of the pad's drawing area. These icons do not appear on the screen. A report line below the graphic window indicates the function currently in use, but actual on-screen selection takes place only within a function – choosing pencil thickness, for instance, or spray pattern.

Despite a good selection of functions, the program can be quite difficult to use. In particular, it is very hard to get the shape you want in freehand drawing mode. The problem is not so much accuracy as inertia – the cursor continually lags slightly behind the motion of the pen. Using a fine line, this delay is large enough to make freehand drawing rather unpleasant – with a broader line, however, things slow down to a snail's pace.

The biggest disappointment was in trying to trace a drawing directly onto the screen. This is the one task for which some peripheral such as *Grafpad* is necessary – the one job mice and light-pens can't handle reliably. Sadly, for all its claims of pixel accuracy and repeatability, *Grafpad* is let down by the most obvious of things – the shape of the pen. Quite simply, the end of the pen is too blunt to see where you're putting it. Enormous effort is required to get anything like pixel accuracy, even with large, simple shapes – fine detail is just impossible.

These complaints to one side, I can't help feeling that there's something wrong with the underlying concept of the software package. The real virtue of icon systems, as used by AMX and many non-mouse packages, is that they allow you to work almost entirely 'head up' – you need only look away from the screen for such tasks as text entry. With *Grafpad* on the other hand, you have to keep looking from screen to pad and back again. This does tend to break your concentration, and seems quite unnecessary. After all, on-screen icons would not take up much more space than the report line already does.

To be fair, the pad icon approach does make sense up to a point. The main selling point of *Grafpad* is the way that you can use it to trace drawings onto the screen – and if you're tracing, you have to look down at the pad anyway. Problem is, the original tends to cover the pad icons as well as the drawing area – so even if you're tracing, on-screen icons would be a help.

It's not clear how much support *Grafpad* is going to get in the future – it certainly doesn't have the general applicability of a mouse, and has little to offer outside the graphics field – nor is it at all clear how you would set about using it with your own programs.

G O O D N E W S

- **Can be used to trace directly from paper to screen.**

B A D N E W S

- **Not as flexible as a mouse.**
- **Cursor response is sluggish.**
- **Tracing isn't easy.**
- **Pretty expensive.**

Andrew Wilton investigates the Volex teletext adaptor and gets Ceefax and Oracle on Arnold's monitor.

VOLEX TTX 2000A
Volex Electronics, £145
CPC 464, 664, 6128

Teletext is a general term for text information transmitted as part of a TV signal – in the UK this means the BBC's Ceefax and ITV's Oracle services. The TTX2000A lets you display teletext pages on Arnold, and save the screens to tape or disk. This can be done directly, using Arnold as a terminal, or from Basic via a series of bar commands. More interestingly, perhaps, some teletext pages carry software – this can be downloaded using the adaptor's telesoftware option.

The adaptor is easy to use and the documentation good, though rather technically inclined. Prospective buyers should note, however, that the adaptor alone will not give you a teletext system – although a TV set is not needed, a good aerial and a TV licence both are.

The key question has to be, why would you want to spend so much money on something of such limited usefulness? A modem offers you access to Amstrad-compatible software, electronic mail and vast amounts of information. A teletext adaptor, on the other hand, gives you a much smaller amount of information – and information, moreover, that you can view without even having a computer anyway. If you don't have a teletext set, rest assured you are missing very little. The only really impressive feature is its news coverage – and who wants to save that to disk?

If telesoftware is what you're after, you could be in for a disappointment. Almost all the BBC software is, of course, in BBC Basic and therefore of no use to Arnold owners. As for the occasional text file or Pascal program, these can be downloaded but they are very difficult to use or even look at. For the value that Oracle alone represents on this front, you'll have a hard time justifying the cost.

G O O D N E W S

- ► **Easy to use.**
- ► **Doesn't run up an enormous phone bill.**

B A D N E W S

- ► **Expensive.**
- ► **Not very useful.**
- ► **Needs a good TV aerial, especially for telesoftware.**

Bob Wade wraps his left paw around a new concept in joysticks

Konix Speedking
£12.99, Konix Computer Products

Many different and supposedly "revolutionary" types of joystick have been designed but this is the first one to be really practical. It is a true "hand held" joystick that may transform your gameplaying if you been suckered to a table top for too long.

The hand moulding of the stick is quite large so that young children may not be able to use it that easily but it does come in both left and right handed models, making it suitable for all players. The hand actually wraps around the curved base with the first finger operating the fire button and the thumb keeping the base tightly within the palm. The grip is very comfortable and should enable long hours of play without getting cramp or any other joystick related diseases.

The internal contacts are microswitches which give a positive clicking action. This makes it ideal for platform and waggling games, but it is also suitable for many others. The diagonals are slightly difficult to get where you have to click two contacts together but they do work with a little practice. The stick seems adaptable to most games and is quite responsive, only lacking good rapid fire because the fire button is a microswitch as well.

The construction is good and fairly solid, with microswitches being very reliable so that the movement and fire controls are unlikely to give out without a lot of punishment. The stick shaft is metal with a plastic covering on the exposed half and this too should be very durable. For £12.99 it's an excellent value joystick and although it still won't suit all tastes it's a good, cheap, all-rounder.

G O O D N E W S

- ► **Left and right handed models.**
- ► **Well contoured to the hand.**
- ► **Well positioned fire button.**
- ► **Responsive and hard wearing microswitches.**
- ► **Nice price.**

B A D N E W S

- ► **May not suit all hand sizes.**
- ► **Can't get really rapid fire.**



ARNOLD'S EDUCAT

Can Arnold help in the struggle for self-improvement? Is teacher obsolete? We go

Right you lot! Can you *please* pay attention and *stop* playing with those infernal computer games. Yes, that includes you too, Wade. I've got something to tell you all that could make all the difference between the scrapheap and spending the rest of your lives in good, respectable, well-paid jobs. Magazine journalism, for instance.

Educational software. That's what I want to talk to you about. Now I know many of you, perhaps *all* of, have got these home microcomputer things. Probably those 'Arnold' things I read about in that *Amstrad Action* comic I confiscated from Wade during Maths this morning.

But what do you with them, eh? You spend all your time on trivial, time-wasting games! And stop sniggering Wade, or I'll wipe the smile off your face before you've got time to say '*Everyone's a Wally*'!

Yes, you spend hours on these games when most of you can't even spell, tell the time, do simple mathematics or speak a word of a foreign language. Let alone find the time to do some 'O' Level revision.

So I want you to listen very carefully indeed to what I'm going to tell you. It could transform your miserable lives. Yes, Wade, even yours!

You can get hold of educational software for just about every age-group, from the tiny tot up to the adult learner. It doesn't make much sense to lump it all together, as if the problems of content and presentation were the same for the six-year-old as for the grey-beard – so we'll begin at the beginning, with software for the *very* early learner.

Tiny Tots

Surprisingly – to *me* at least – there are several programs on the Amstrad specifically for the 3-5 year olds. All of them are produced by the prolific Bourne Educational Software, and marketed by Amsoft. All three feature the word 'Happy' as part of the title, presumably to tempt parents into thinking that their little ones are not going to be subjected to a traumatically unpleasant 'early learning situation'.

Happy Numbers
Happy Letters
Happy Writing

Age: 3-5
BES/Amsoft
£8.95 cass, £14.95 disk

The aim of the **Happy Numbers** program is to teach 'children to recognise numbers and introduce them to counting'. Since it's for the very young it is designed to allow the child to use the computer 'without needing any reading skills.'

The numbers in question are from 1 to 9, which seems a reasonable enough range given the intended age of the users. Like the other two programs in this section, *Happy Numbers* stars the 'happy face' – get the answer right and it looks happy, get it wrong and the smile is rapidly wiped off.

This is a sensible approach to take in a program for the very young: the expressions of happiness or sadness on people's faces are signs that children respond to from an early age. Graphics in this program are simple – childish, almost – but, again, that can be seen as an advantage for the age group.

What the child has to do is to press the correct number key the appropriate number of times when a particular number appears on the screen. All other keys are deactivated, so if 4 is the number only the 4 key will function. At each press a flower appears; if the answer is wrong, as well as the face becoming disgruntled, the flowers will turn white and the correct number will be displayed. Sucess also brings a six-note tune.

Happy Letters features the same face. In this program you can make it smile by correctly typing in the letters or words on the screen.

Instead of flowers, there are fish. If you get a letter right they swim cross screen, turn green, smirk and swim back. At the end of a sequence a nasty alligator emerges and gobbles up the fish belonging to the wrong answers.

There's a little more variety in this than in *Happy Numbers* – you can choose to have letters, words, letters in upper or lower case – but those repetitious fish moving back and forth very slowly, and the duff tune, are potentially pretty boring.

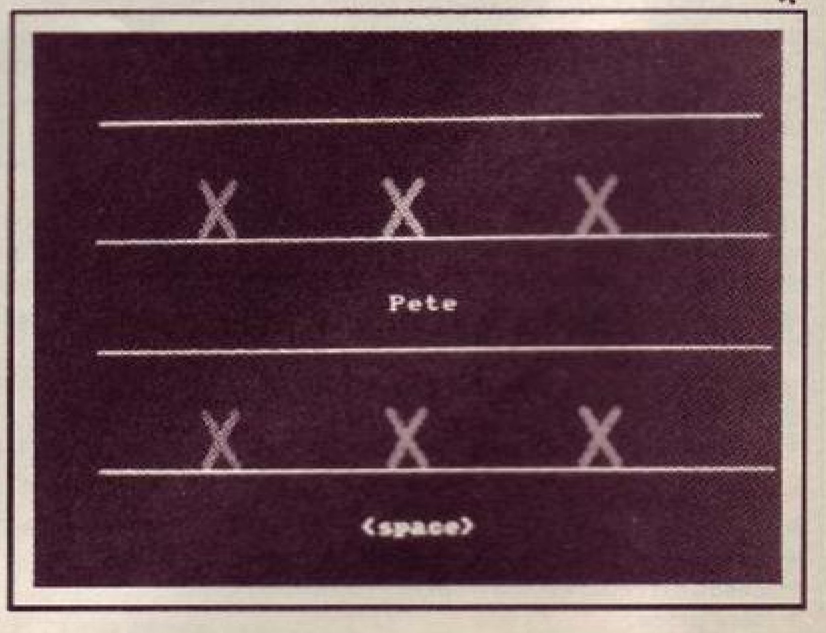
Happy Writing represents something of a breakthrough for the Tiny Tots in terms of graphics and sound. Yellow tractors pulling on the rules, a 'magic pencil', and a whole seven or eight bars of *Pop goes the weasel*. OK, it doesn't sound or look *that* amazing, but it's certainly an advance on the previous two programs.

It tries to 'assist children to write, and in particular, to form their letters or numbers correctly.' To this end *Happy Writing* employs the 'magic pencil': after a colourful tractor has tugged on the two lines, the 'magic pencil' – a yellow dot – shows clearly how the letter is formed. The tiny tot then has to copy this on paper.

It's all done with a bit more panache than the other two BES programs, even down to the sound changing in tone depending on the height of the character between the lines. *Happy Writing* has five options, including one to add words of your own choosing to the list. ★

Happy Numbers: *Not enough variety here. And not much program for the money.*

4/10



ONAL SOFTWARE

back to school and grade educa - tional software

Happy Letters: *Sits too close to Happy Letters in class. Consequently, has all the same faults.*

4/10

Happy Writing: Much the best performer in this class. More variety, more colour and wider choice than the others.

1/10

Report

There has to be a question mark over the value of the computer as an educational tool for the very young. Adults must always be on hand to set up the equipment, show the children what to do, make sure they don't pour Ribena in the disc drive. And however user-friendly the program is made it can never provide a fraction of the sympathy or help of a human.

These three programs are by no means bad. In fact, *Happy Writing* has some very good qualities. But none of them make any great use of the Amstrad's graphics and sound or provide enough variety to make them really serious helpmates for the early learner.

Junior School

From the age of five or so onwards children are probably capable of operating a computer program, if not of setting up the machine, on their own. In this age range there's a bit more variety, since at least the basics of reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic should by now have been acquired.

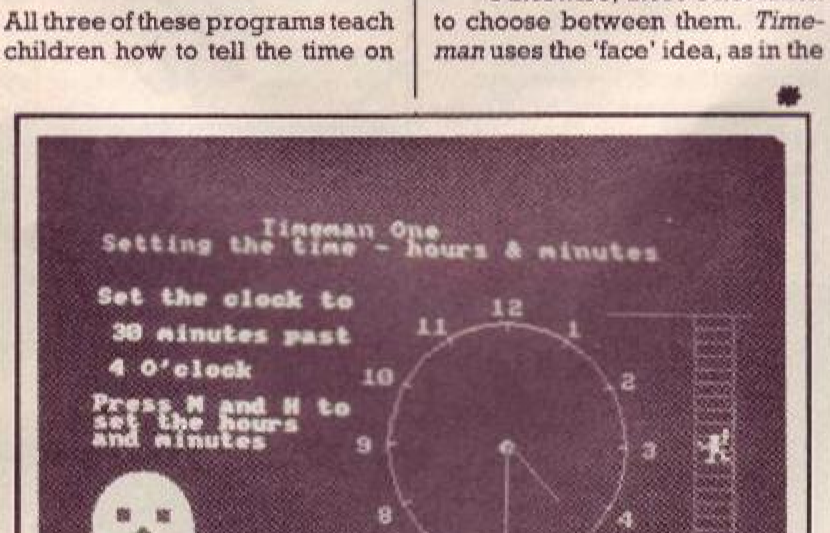
Timeman One/Two
Age: 4-10
BES/Amsoft
£8.95 cass, £14.95 disk

Tell the Time
Duckworth
£5.95 cass

All three of these programs teach children how to tell the time on both the conventional system and the 24 hour clock. They work in a very similar way, with the major difference that the BES/Amsoft programs take two cassettes to do what *Tell the Time* does in one – by the brilliantly simple idea of using both sides of the cassette! Staggering, isn't it?

Otherwise, there's not much to choose between them. *Timeman* uses the 'face' idea, as in the *Happy* series, but so does *Tell*. The latter has a marginally more attractive clock display, with the minutes clearly marked, and features ticking. Just like the real thing.

But *Tell the Time* is pretty boring. At least *Timeman* gives you a game idea to work at as an inducement to get things right: for each correct answer a little man climbs a rung in a ladder if he makes it to the top he dances a jubilant jig and a jolly tune strikes up. It's not much, but at least it makes the effort.



Timeman ✱
Tell the Time: *On grounds of value for money, Tell the Time wins hands down. But Timeman is the more entertaining program.*

6/10 + 5/10

The House that Jack Built
Age: 5-11
Knightsoft
Price unavailable

Jack's house is built from the bricks of multiplication and the mortar of division. The aim of this educational game is to get enough correct answers to allow Jack finish the task of constructing his house.

Jack is a portly but pretty basic character in red pants and blue pullover. If you get an answer right he waddles across the screen and lays a row of bricks (it's not clear where he gets them from). All this to the horribly repetitive strains of 'Heigh ho, heigh ho, it's off to work we go.' There is, though, an option to switch off the music.

All goes well as long as you're getting the answers right – the building work progresses without a hitch. Problems arise when you get an answer wrong: half Jack's house falls down. It's discouraging, to say the least.

This means that the program suffers from attention-span problems. It took me 1: mins. and 16 secs before Jack ope ed the garage door and wave me goodbye. I suspect many t ers would have either dozed off or given up in despair long before that.

Too many opportunities for the student to be discouraged. The idea is reasonable but the execution has not been well thought out.

3/10

Map Rally
Age: 7-13
BES/Amsoft
£8.95 cass, £14.95 disk

According to the blurb, this 'teaches co-ordinates and compass directions...improves estimating and accuracy...helps develop deductive reasoning.'

It takes the form of two one or two player games set on a grid. In the first of them you have to move around by compass directions to find hidden checkpoints; in the second you do the same thing by means of co-ordinates.

Both of them are very boring. They might possibly re-inforce what had been learnt, but only if the student can stay awake.

Very little use has been made of graphics or sound. The game idea is dire. A compass and a map must be cheaper and better.

3/10

Animal, Vegetable, Mineral World-Wise
Age: 7-15
BES/Amsoft
£8.95 cass, £11.95 disk

Although the second of these programs is what we might call a 'geog-prog', and the first isn't, they've been put together because they both use exactly the same idea, graphics, sound and messages, and they both need a separate database tape to get anything out of them.

They both rerquire the student to ask the computer questions in order to build up 'trees' of knowledge. Indeed, one of the claims made for them is that they 'allow the child to "educate" the computer by entering a series of questions and answers.' Another claim is that they stimulate dis-



cussion and the use of reference books.

This may well by true, since when first loaded *AVM* knows only six objects and *World-Wise* only twelve answers. Clearly, then, a lot of work has to be put in to get anything out of them – and this will depend on who uses them, and where.

In their original state the programs are not impressive: a handful of data and a simple structure doesn't seem a lot for your money. The programs' responses are none too sophisticated – 'Mmmm! Let me think' and 'Hooray! I got it right!' And who earth wants to 'educate' a computer?

Something can be made of them, if the user is prepared to put in a lot of work. But I wonder how many will do that.

5/10

Magic Maths
Age: 4-8
School Software
£9.95 cass, £11.95 disk

Here, at last, is a program that really does merit the term 'educational *game*', a program which uses the graphics and sound of the Amstrad to try and liven up the learning process. That's not to say that it's the best thing since *Space Invaders*, but School Software have at least made an effort and I suspect that the targeted age group would enjoy as well as learn from *Magic Maths*.

The game idea is simple but effective. The operands in the questions – addition or subtraction – are displayed on railway carriages at the bottom of the screen. If you get it right, the train's speed increases by 10 m.p.h. If you get it wrong, you have a second go. If it's still wrong, the engine explodes. The aim of the game is to get up to 100 m.p.h.

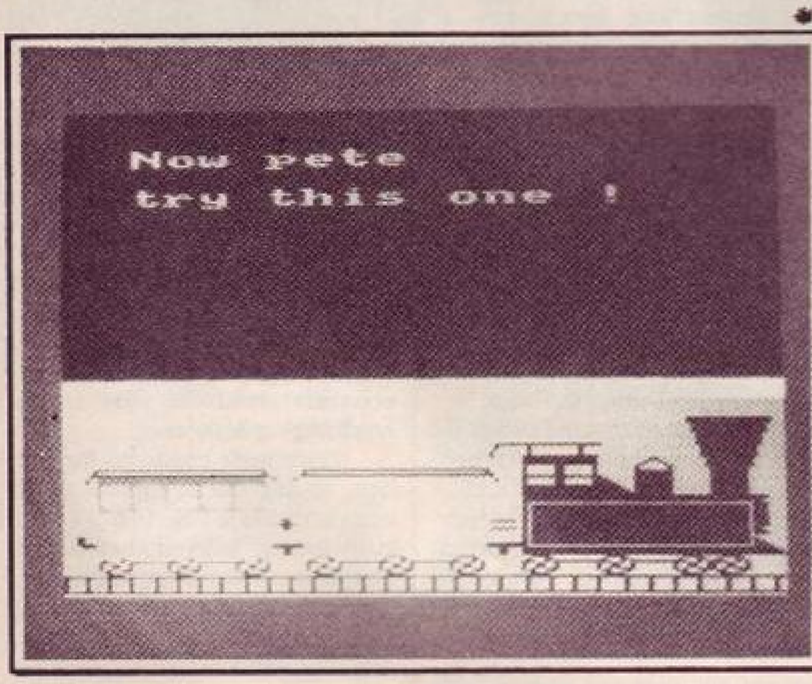
The graphics are colourful, while the chuffing and hooting provide an effective accompaniment. Answers get a varied response from the computer, from 'I can tell you have done this before', through 'OK wise guy I'm going to give you a really tough one' to the flattering 'You must be another computer'.

There isn't a huge number of questions, but there are enough to thoroughly practice the operations in question. Above all, *Magic Maths* is fun, and there's not a lot of that about in educational software.

A good effort, putting into educational practice some of the graphic and sonic skill of games.

8/10

Report
Quite a number of games to choose from here, but few of them make much of the computer's facilities. Just at the age when children are probably beginning to zap alien invaders and search for the lost scroll of Morgrop, educational software – with the exception of *Magic Maths* – decides to go for very dull graphics and sound. Strange, isn't it?



Secondary School
After the profusion of programs for the 4-10 year-olds, there's something of a shortage of programs until we get to the crucial 'O' Level period. All three in this section come from Irish software house School Software, a company who are proving to be almost as prolific as BES.

Better Spelling
Age: 9-14
School Software
£9.95 cass, £11.95 disk

The program offers sections on 16 areas of common spelling error. Each section has between 15 and 30 questions. There's a gamesy feel to it – though not to the same extent as the same company's *Magic Maths* – with wacky sounds as you key in the answers and a laser-base that comes and blasts your score.

The sections are well-chosen to cover most common errors – spelling with a silent 'e', 'to/too/two' etc. – and each one is preceded by notes summarising the main points.

Of course, this is basically what you'd get in a school book plus a little entertainment. As such it's not bad. But it's not brilliant either.

6/10

Physics 1
Age: 12-16
School Software
£9.95 cass, £11.95 disk

For a slightly older age group than the spelling program, this covers 9 topics that a student would encounter on the way to 'O' Levels – Heat, Electricity, Light and Sound, Pressure etc.

Again, there are brief notes available before the excercises, and again there is the laser-base. Get an answer wrong and you will be given a clue, wrong again and you will be given the answer.

Rather more use is made of graphics, which is only to be expected since Physics is the sort of subject which lends itself more easily to graphic illustration and explanation: circuit diagrams, levers, lenses and so on are shown clearly and unfussily.

Could be very useful for the student in the middle of, or towards the end of, an 'O' Level Course. A good variety of questions is well-illustrated and practised.

7/10

Better Maths
Age: 12-16
School Software
£9.95 cass, £11.95 disk

This is pretty much the same as *Physics 1* in terms of presentation, with the same tune and the same laser-base, but does not seem to be pitched at the quite the same level.

It appears to be aimed more at the early rather than late stages of an 'O' Level course of study. The 10 areas covered include statistics, percentages, mensuration etc. and each of them has 10 questions – which doesn't really add up to an awful lot.

Less use is made of graphics, as one would expect, but the program does give brief explanations of the principles involved before each set of exercises.

A reasonable aid to students in the lower part of the 12-16 bracket, but probably not of much use to an 'O' Level candidate.

6/10

Report
Not a lot of choice here. Perhaps this reflects the difficulties of providing on one program for students from 11 or 12 up to 15 or 16. The older ones should be doing much more complex things than the younger ones. A program that tries to cater for the whole range will necessarily fall between two, if not more, stools.

'O' Level Revision
We've now reached crisis time in the student's life. What can the software people do to help? Organise revision, perhaps. Two competing sets of revision programs are currently available – one from BES/Amsoft, the other from Hill MacGibbon.

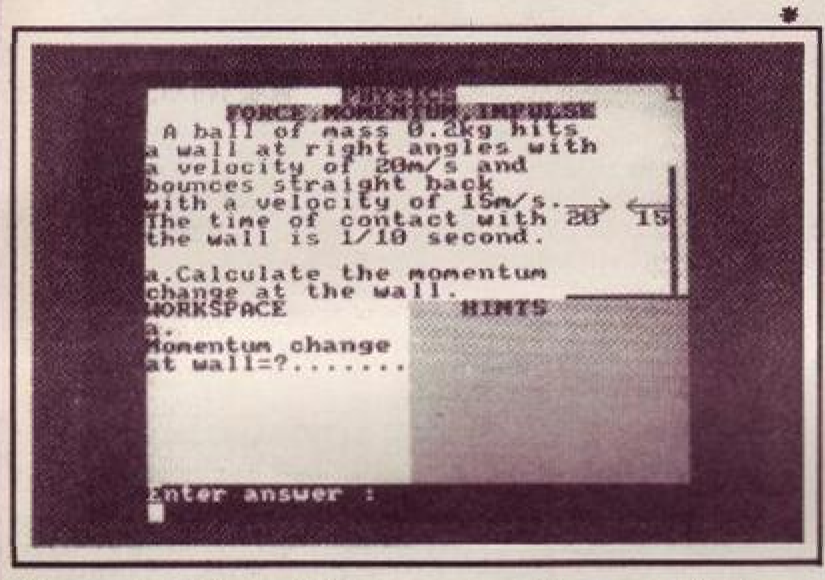
Pan Course Tutors
Physics, Chemistry, Biology, French Maths
HillMacGibbon
£14.95 cass

These things present you with quite a package. You don't just get the two tapes, but also a booklet containing instructions *and* the Pan Study Aid book for the appropriate subject. One way or another, it seems, you will be forced to learn something.

The programs all use a similar structure. You start by doing a set of Diagnostic Tests, with multiple-choice questions in the booklet. At the end, the computer gives you a full report – marks, time, suggestions for study – and you move to the Learning Modules on tape, after doing some revision in the Study Aids book. It's all a teeny bit cumbersome, but does have the good old-fashioned virtue of thoroughness. You'll certainly find out where you're weaknesses are.

In the modules – in *Physics* there are 23 of them – you are a given problems to work out with accompanying diagrams. If you get the answer wrong you are given hints – the more wrong answers, the more hints you get. Finally, you get a report and suggestions for further study.

These are certainly solid, useful packages. They cover just about everything required for an 'O' Level course. But the student needs to be serious about using them – you can't just dip into them when the fancy takes you.



'O' Level & CSE Revision
BES/Amsoft
£14.95 cass, £19.95 disk

These programs aim at the same area in the same way as the Pan programs, but they are nowhere near as impressive. For a start, there is no BES/Amsoft Study guide book. Secondly, the actual program is not as comprehensive or as helpful.

You start with 70 multiple-choice questions which serve a diagnostic purpose. Unfortunately, there's no indication of why or how you get questions wrong. Then there are six topics: Optics and Waves, Mechanics, Radiactivity, Electricity, Electromagnetism and Heat.

Here the approach is again to use diagrams, with the student filling in key words or performing calculations. But there is little help on *why* wrong answers are wrong , and the comments at the end of a test are not revelatory – 'You scored 20 out of a possible 180 points. Oh dear!' Yes, 'oh dear' just about sums it up.

The Pan Course Tutors are superior in every respect: thorough, well-presented and helpful. The BES programs are just not comprehensive enough to be of great value.

8/10 + 4/10

Report

A dismal paucity of material in this category. Surprising really, since this is one area where the power of the computer in storage and retrieval of information ought to be seen at its best. And many thousands of students go through the ordeal of 'O' Levels every year. You would think there'd be quite a demand for this sort of thing.

In the Language Lab

One thing computers haven't acquired yet is the kind of speech that would allow you to learn the pronunciation of a foreign language – you'll have to stick to the Linguaphone records for that. What they should be able to do is provide everything you could get in a text-book, and a little bit more – large stores of vocabulary, tests, hints and tips.

The French Mistress
The Spanish Tutor
The German Master
Kosmos
CPC 464, 664, 6128
£8.95 cass, £12.95 disk
£19.95 dual level disk

These three titles uses the same control program to run what are essentially vocabulary tests. Each language has Levels A and B, available on separate cassettes. If you want to get both at the same time, you either have to buy two cassettes or the extra-price disk, at £19.95. It seems a lot for what you get.

Level A, for instance, provides you with 16 vocabulary areas – family, weather, clothes etc. In each area there are around 40-60 words. At the most, less than 1000 words. All you can do with these is to test yourself, either from English to the foreign language, or vice versa.

Admittedly, you can add entries to a particular area, or even create totally new lessons to run under the control program. But why should the purchaser either want or need to do this? For full-priced programs you might expect considerably more data, and considerably more to do with it.

Kosmos claim that these are 'specialised and totally serious language learning aids' and that one should not therefore expect anything in the way of entertainment. Well, I don't see how that follows. I can get 'totally serious' vocabulary learning aids in book form for much less money – and they would contain much more information. What 's the point of using a computer unless you really *use* its facilities?

4/10

End of Term Report

So, it's unlikely that any of the currently available educational software will go so far as to transform lives. Some of it will be a big help to children with, say, maths or spelling problems. Some of it will help students of all ages to acquire the minimum necessary vocabulary for learning a foreign language. Certain programs will be handy for 'O' Level revison. A lot of software, though, is shoddy and no better than the tattiest of old textbooks.

There isn't an awful lot of it about either. Three or four houses produce the bulk of available educational software: it's hard not to get the feeling that they've had things just a bit too easy. A little more competition could have meant a wider range and higher standards.

As things stand at the moment, educational software is still in junior school. Little use is made of the Amstrad's graphics and sound; the huge amount of memory available, on disk especially, is not exploited; hardly anything has been learned from games in terms of attractive presentation or even packaging.

The educational houses need to rethink their strategy interms of a huge potential audience who have grown accustomed to superb graphics and sound in their games. Why should they settle for anything less accomplished in the educational field?

It's not as if the ability and the ideas are lacking. Nearly all the programs reviewed in this article have at least the germ of a good idea and a suggestion of interesting presentation. But hardly any of them go far enough – a lot more homework needs to be done before educational software can pass its exams and make itself an indispensable part of everyone's software library.

CHEAT MODE

The section where your tips, pokes and devious game-busting ploys are relayed to the nation

Cauldron

Patrick Guest from Bradford has sent in some tips to get you going in this bewitching game from Palace.

As you leave the house go right to get off the screen and pick up the key that is usually on the next screen. Now fly left until you come to a landing space where you can refuel your magic. Fly left again until you come to a door – if you have a key land and go in. Collect the frog inside and return to the cottage to deposit your first ingredient.

Watch out for seagulls and crossbones because they take away half of your magic. Also, do not go in through the first door when flying right from the cottage because this is the pumpkin's lair.



Caves of Doom

This poke for 255 lives was sent in by **Adam Milner** of Godalming and is input using method 1.

```
10 MEMORY 5240
20 LOAD"MCODE,5320
30 POKE &2525,255
40 CALL 5320
```

Spellbound

Mastertronic's latest classic has had everybody thinking hard but with the help of some clues from **Simon Cuddeford** of Kenilworth and **Stephen Rylance** of Warrington you may be able to make some more progress. If things have all become a bit too much for you then perhaps arch-pokester Tim Gilbert of Whitby can help – this month he's provided a poke to give infinite strength and keep the mirror in constant operation.

Here we go with the cryptic clues first.

1. Don't bottle things up, shed some light on the problem with a corker of an object.
2. When there's no ceiling above you and nothing to the east you'll find the object that bestows leadership qualities.
3. Restorative fluid will bring you strength but only when touched by the man of short length.
4. When summoned by music and given the miolnir a Norse god may solve your transport problems.
5. The terrible smell of fish and veg will give you the power to pass through gas.
6. For rapid travel drop the pad and carry the key when you want to return.

The poke is input using method 2 to find the section of the program called "SPELLBOUND" that follows the "SCODE" blocks. No on screen prompt will appear after running the listing – just press play.

```
10 MEMORY 2969
20 FOR T=2970 TO 3047
30 READ A$:POKE
T,VAL("&"+A$)
40 NEXT T
50 CALL 2970
60 DATA
18,03,00,00,00,21,00,0C,22,9C,0B
,3E,13,32,9E,0B,11,00,08,3E,16,C
D,
A1,BC,2A,9C,0B,11,00,08,19,22,9
C,0B,3A,9E,0B,3D,32,9E,0B,20,E
5,21,00,A4,11,
1D,03,3E,16,CD,A1,BC,3E,00,32,
6B,12,32,97,31,32,3F,32,3E,1C,32
,55,13,3E,4C, 32,56,13,C3,03,0C
```

STRANGELOOP

The first solution has been received from *Lee Simpson* and *Anthony Lamont* of Northolt in Middlesex – they managed to finish the game on the 6th of January. So with their help here are some cryptic clues.

1. This thing gives you square eyes but if you think aero and give it to that you'll have an arresting solution.
2. Give that depressed droid a big kiss.
3. The point of this clue should be put in a place of convalescence.
4. Credit where credit's due travelling on foot has its advantages.
5. A shocking route will lead to ph<7
6. You'll get a burning desire to place liquid in three quarters of a century.
7. Well done and hide face, now you can get in and see the centre.

The Wild Bunch



Tips for the Firbird cheapie have come in from *Vince Williams* of Birmingham.

1. Make a note of the murderer's description. You are told this at the start.
2. Enter a town.
3. Go to the Sheriff's office to see the wanted poster and make a note of the criminal's description and name.
4. Go to the telegraph office and find out which town to avoid when you leave this one.
5. Play poker in the saloon. It isn't hard to win so get as much money as possible before the opponent gives up (NB a royal flush cannot be beaten so bet as much as possible).
6. Go to the store and buy provisions but keep some money to return to the saloon to play poker. Repeat this until you have the following: one horse, one saddle, one Colt 45, 500 Colt 45 bullets, one rifle, 150 rifle bullets, one knife, 20 days food, 20 days horse food, 20 days water, one greatcoat, one whisky, one blanket, one medicine and over $135.
7. Look around saloon, if you don't know the person's identity don't

3D Grand Prix

Phil Doherty of Luton provides the key to moving between tracks. Press the ESC key to pause the game, hold down the CTRL key and type ARTWORK. This will take you onto the next track.

Defend or Die

Chris Suraway of Chippenham has sent in some tips on Alligata's shoot-em-up which he thinks is still one of the best around.

When a new wave of landers appears descend with it at full speed, shooting all the time, which should dispose of most of them. Once you reach the level of the mountains stay at that height until the next group of landers (they come in threes). Travel at full speed and move up and down by about five pixels, shooting the whole time. On the later attack waves do not stop for anything if it is crowded.

Pods are a problem as they turn into four swarmers when shot and you'll need to take your time over them. Before attacking the landers find the pods and get a screen's length between you and them. Stop and shoot them and you should have enough time to get the swarmers as well. If done on the early levels this should leave you with enough smart bombs to deal with pods on later levels.





challenge them.
8. Leave and go to a safe town.
9. On the journey bribe all humans and kill all the animals.
10. Repeat from number two.

Nonterraqueous

The map we printed in issue four had one or two errors in it which were pointed out by someone who just signed themselves David. The coordinates refer to the level down the right hand side of the map and the column counted from the left of it.
26-16, 42-3, 42-4 contain laser barriers.
31-16, 40-15 have bombs.
4-11 has photon thrusters in it.

Manic Miner

To get infinite lives on the Amsoft version of *Manic Miner* only, input the following poke, from **Phil Doherty** of Luton, using method 1.

```
10 MEMORY &506D
20 LOAD"MANMIN15",&506E
30 POKE &6E25,0
40 CALL &506E
```

We've also got a poke for the Software Projects version of the game which allows you to do even more. It's come from various sources and certainly seems to have been doing the rounds of the hackers. It's entered using method 1 and gives infinite lives, allows you to fall any height, stops the air running out and allows you to switch screens by pressing ESC.

```
10 MEMORY &4500
20 LOAD"!DATA MK1 V1.3"
30 POKE &6FA9,0
40 POKE &713E,0
50 POKE &7311,0
60 POKE &7401,24
70 CALL &6E5C
```



Who Dares Wins

Another poke from **Richard Monteiro** from Hendon – the man who brought you *Ghouls*. This time it gives 255 lives and grenades on the Alligata battle game. Note that lines 10 to 130 can be left out but you won't have any sound while playing.

```
10 ENV 1,1,12,1,1,0,5,12,-1,2
20 ENV 2,1,13,1,1,0,15,13,-1,5
30 ENV 3,1,13,1,12,-1,3
40 ENT 3,5,40,1,5,20,1,10,25,1
50 ENV 4,11,1,5,2,0,120,11,-1,14
60 ENT -5,14,-10,1,1,120,1
70 ENV 5,1,15,1,15,-1,12
80 ENV 6,1,12,1,12,-1,9
90 ENV 7,15,-1,2
100 ENV 8,10,1,1,20,0,1,10,-1,2
110 ENT -8,1,1,1
120 ENV 9,11,-1,2,1,10,1,10,-
1,2,1,10,1,10,-1,2
130 SOUND 129,250,0,0,5,5
140 FOR T = &BE00 TO &BE32
150 READ A$:POKE
T,VAL("&" + A$)
160 NEXT T:CALL &BE00
170 DATA
21,40,00,11,30,60,3E,63,CD,A1
180 DATA
BC,21,70,60,11,90,50,3E,11,CD
190 DATA
A1,BC,3E,FF,32,28,A1,3E,FF,32
200 DATA
2D,A1,3E,52,32,B2,69,3E,50,32
210 DATA
B3,69,3E,4D,32,B4,69,C3,10,A0
220 DATA
00,00,00,00,00,00,00,00,00,00
```

Poke methods

This is the section where we explain how to input the majority of the pokes using two types of method.

Method 1: Type in the listing. Rewind the game tape. Type RUN followed by pressing enter. Follow on screen prompts to load the game.

Method 2: The tape header/loader/title screen, comprising usually of one or two data blocks has to be skipped. Rewind the game tape. Type in CAT followed by enter and play the tape. Watch the screen and a message will come up

Found FILENAME block 1 OK

where FILENAME will be replaced by the name of the loading section. The next message that appears will be the main program appearing in the same style.

Found MAINFILE block 1 OK

where the MAINFILE will be different for each game. Note the point on the tape counter at which this second file appears. Stop the tape and rewind to just before that point. Type in the program and RUN it. Then press play on the tape deck.

One Man and his Droid

Clive Sewell of Sandiacre and **Philip Kirwan** of Brookland have both sent in passwords – here are the ones for the first ten levels.

1. **None**
2. **EMPIRE**
3. **PREDATORY**
4. **RUMINATE**
5. **RYEGRASS**
6. **VACUUM**
7. **VAMPIRE**
8. **RAGOUT**
9. **GRAIN**
10. **AASVOGEL**

Jet Set Willy

All you *They Sold a Million* owners can relax because Phil Howard from Nottingham has solved all your problems with the smaller version of *JSW*. His poke works only on this reduced version and gives you infinite lives and a restart function. It's entered using method one and to restart the game at any time you just have to press ENTER. Thanks Phil – there are a lot of grateful *TSAM* owners out there.

```
10 DATA 21,25,22,36,73,
   23,36,6A,21,40,20
20 DATA 11,40,00,01,EB,
   01,ED,B0,21,40,00
30 DATA E5,21,00,BB,E5,
   21,EB,01,E5,21,07
40 DATA B8,E5,21,BB,02,
   E5,F1,21,EA,B1,11
50 DATA D9,B1,F3,C9,21,
   B7,57,36,00,23,36
60 DATA C3,23,36,11,23,
   36,75,C3,66,4D,F5
70 DATA CD,09,BB,FE,0D,
   CA,33,54,F1,C3,BB
80 DATA 57
90 MEMORY &2000
100 LOAD"":LOAD"!":CALL
&7070
110 LOAD"!",&2040
120 FOR X = &74D0 TO &751D
130 READ A$
140 POKE X,VAL("&"+A$)
150 NEXT
160 CALL &74D0
```

Amsgolf

DP Glennerster from Paignton has sent in the distances that each club will strike the ball from fairway and rough on handicap zero. This is attained with the code K3R56. The actual distances hit will vary slightly but not by much so use this as a reference guide.

CLUB	FAIRWAY	ROUGH
Driver	248	149
3 wood	231	142
4 wood	228	138
5 wood	226	131
6 wood	213	129
3 iron	219	127
4 iron	208	125
5 iron	200	115
6 iron	183	102
7 iron	143	88
8 iron	130	78
9 iron	108	65

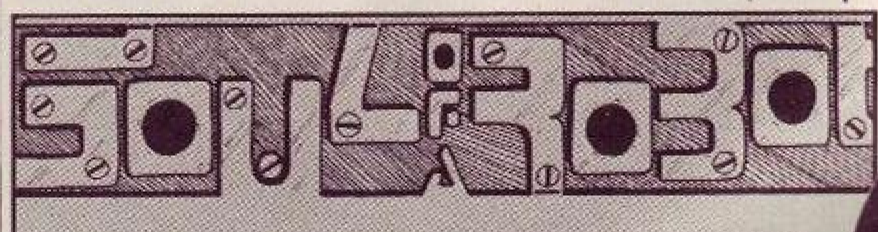


Sorcery Plus

JP Jones of Withington has sent in some handy information for anyone still struggling with the disk-based classic. First is a list of what objects you should take from chapter one to chapter two and what you get instead. Second is a list of which objects kill which nasties in chapter two.

Crown = Heart
Spell Book = Amstrad User
Sorceror's Moon = Roland
Goblet of Wine = Strangeloop Cassette

Clove of garlic kills cyclops
Wooden club gets you through most earth walls
Holy cross kills witches
Bird of peace kills necromancer's servant



Dave Porter of Mastrick has also sent in an infinite lives poke for the Mastertronic game. It is entered using method two and you should stop the tape immediately after the message SOUL/ROBOT BLOCK 1 % OK has appeared on screen.

```
10 OPENOUT"":MEMORY
999:LOAD"!",1000
20 CALL 1003,&FFFE,16383
30 CALL 1003,41500,40000
40 POKE 2304,255
50 CALL 2000
```

Corrections

One or two errors crept in last month – we hope they didn't cause too much strife. In the *Kung Fu* and *Number 1* pokes tape users trying to input the pokes will, in addition to the other instructions, need to delete the |TAPE command in line 20.

The *Cauldron* poke also had a mistake with the word DATA being missed out at the start of line 100 and the loading instructions neglecting to mention that you should stop the tape and type in the program immediately after the words CAULDRON BLOCK 1 & OK appear on screen (using the CAT command).

3D Grand Prix

If you don't want to use the cheat method printed on the previous page then try these tips from Steven Dunn of Cookham.

After Jarama you will find that the other cars are on the limit most of the time and overtake you because you overheat and can't keep the speed up. The only solution is to make sure you perfect your start method for a race. It is then absolutely essential you get into first place and overtake one or two backmarkers. You will then find you can slow down and get through the race.

I find I either win races or don't qualify. It is also very important not to come off the track or go into anyone at any time, better to slow right down or go onto the grass on the inside of the bend. Best overtaking point is the outside line of a bend.

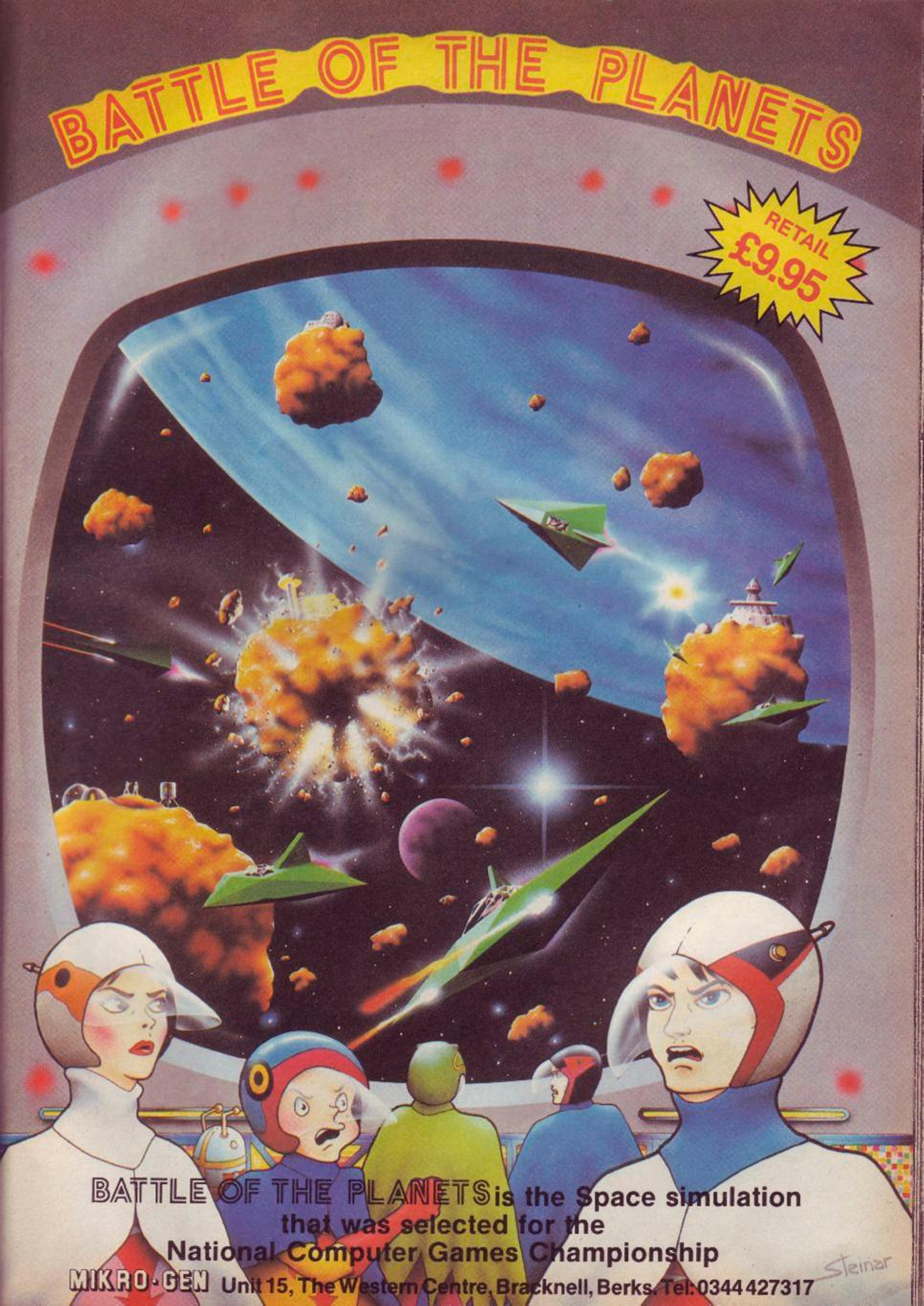
£10 Rewards

This month's three lucky winners of £10 for their excellent contributions are Gordon Scott for his *Willow Pattern* map, Richard Monteiro for his *Who Dares Wins II* pokes and Lee Simpson/Anthony Lamont for their solution to *Strangeloop*. Well done the four of you. To join them in getting a tenner just send us the best in tips, pokes and maps so that if we use them you stand a chance of getting that lovely cash.

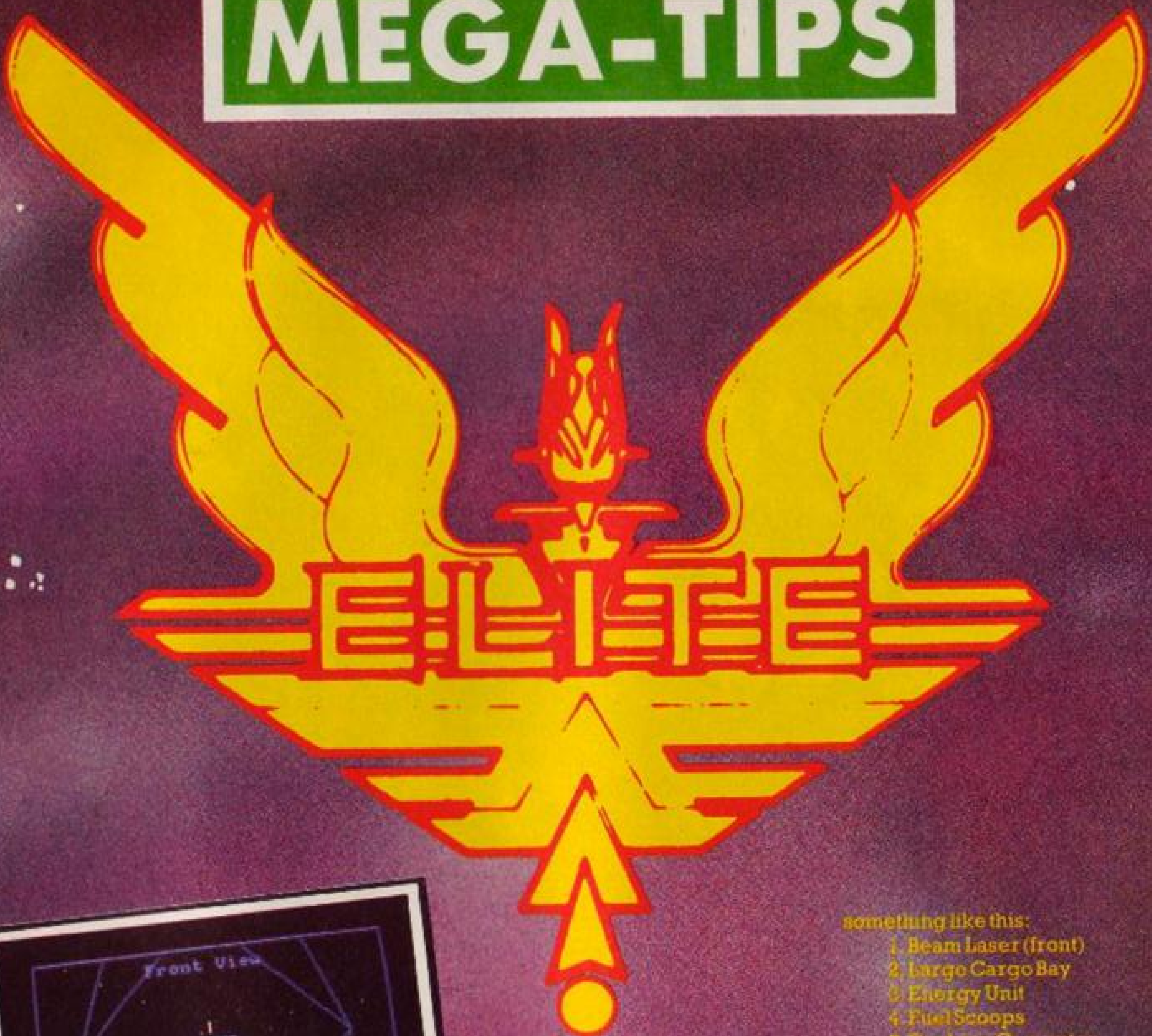
Pinball Wizard

Dave Porter from Mastrick has sent in an infinite balls poke for this pinball game. It's entered using method one.

```
10 MEMORY 12287
20 LOAD"WIZARD"
30 POKE 24477,0
40 CALL 20224
```


BATTLE OF THE PLANETS
RETAIL £9.95
BATTLE OF THE PLANETS is the Space simulation that was selected for the National Computer Games Championship
MIKRO-GEN Unit 15, The Western Centre, Bracknell, Berks. Tel: 0344 427317
Steinar

MEGA-TIPS



STARTING OFF

On the whole, it's a wise move to use the joystick for controlling your ship in flight, but – unlike other versions – the keyboard control does work quite well, although it's a little confusing.

The first time you emerge from a space station, fly straight ahead for a short distance and then stop; turn round to face the space station and practice flying into the entrance hole. Make sure you get rotation going properly, i.e. at the same speed as the space station's rotation. If you can get this right, then full-blown docking will prove a little easier to master.

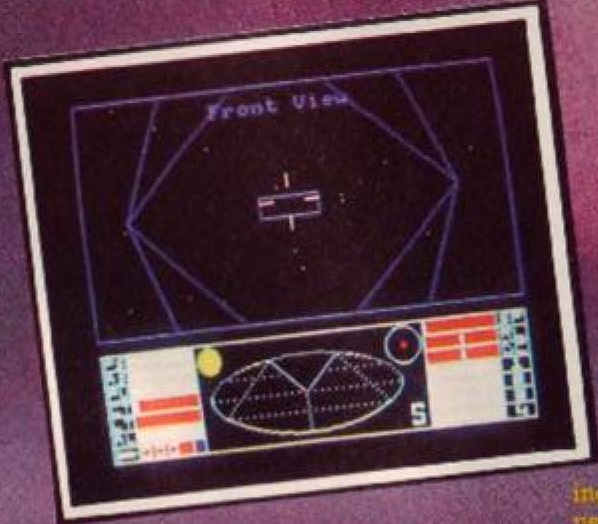
If this goes well, relaunch yourself and practice using the compass to find the station.

Another thing to investigate early on is the instrument panel – not all of the readings are explained in the manual. FS and AS are Fore and Aft shields respectively; if they are depleted further hits will start to destroy energy banks 1-4.

Below the shields are readings such as Fuel, Cabin Temperature and Laser Temperature. If you fly too close to the sun cabin temperature reaches maximum and you will pretty quickly explode. If altitude gets too low you will break up in the atmosphere. Lasers will stop firing if they overheat, but this is only a problem with Beam and Military lasers.

On the right-hand side of the panel are the Speed indicators. SP is forward speed, RL and DC are right-left roll and dive-climb indicators – but these two are really not too important and can be safely ignored. The speed indicator is really only worth looking at when docking since most of the time it remains on maximum.

Underneath these are the four energy banks, which are depleted by firing or by taking shots through a weakened shield. In the centre of the panel is the Scanner. The only way to see how this



probably not so much in line. Turn your ship so that you are able to see the station through the right view and the planet through

ing from Lave there are two sensible choices of trade routes. The obvious one is to fly to Leesti and make a lot of small profits out of the Lave-Leesti, Leesti-Lave route. The other, and better, route is to fly from Lave to

something like this:

1. Beam Laser (front)
2. Large Cargo Bay
3. Energy Unit
4. Fuel Scoops
5. Docking Computer
6. Electronic Counter Measure

These are the fairly basic items. It's very useful to have the Large Cargo Bay, both for more trading and for picking up debris from destryed Traders or Pirates.

If you are a Peaceful Trader, then a Mining Laser on the rear could be useful. If, on the other hand, you are more of the Bounty Hunter type – no, that's *not* a trader in choccy – then Front Military Lasers are a must, as is an Energy Bomb. A new Beam Laser can also be quite handy, if you can

COMBAT

As you struggle through the ranks to the dizzy heights of Dangerous, Deadly and – gasp! – Elite, combat will play an increasingly important part of your life in the Space Lanes. All the Anarchy and Feudal planets are now you favourite hunting grounds, while relying on sun-scooping for a fast escape to a safer world if the action gets too much.

First of all, you must be sure of what you are shooting at. A lot of this decision-making can be done by seeing where opponents appear on the scanner. Harmless and pathetic asteroids usually appear in front of you and are used, it seems, to slow down your Torus-jumping to the planet. But more than once I have had a Viper police ship appear, and shot at it, thinking it was a rock!

Pirates usually appear at a position above-left on the scanner – if there are more than four ships they are undoubtedly Pirates.

When tackling Pirates it is best to try and get them from a distance. If there are many of them, a missile can take out another. If any ships get behind you it is advisable to slow down, pull up and turn 180 degrees so that you have him in your front sights. Then speed up again and, hopefully, you can get on their tail and shoot them apart with no risk of them hitting you. This is just about the only way to take out Sidewinders, due to their speed and manoeuvrability.

Don't panic when dealing with Thargoids. Try to ignore Thargons and go for mother-ships. Do not waste missiles, energy bombs or ECMs – all are useless. When the Thargoid motherships are destroyed, try to collect Thargons as Alien Items with your Fuel Scoops. It's all free money.

When you're in combat remember to have a nice little place fixed up that you can hyperspace

position of a stationary object, such as a space station, changes as you fly around. With a little practice you can locate anything very quickly.

DOCKING

Some people have a lot of difficulty with docking, but it really should be quite simple and natural – for a good pilot. Anyway, here is my approved method...

The entrance to the Space Station is *always* facing the planet, so you must put yourself between the space station and the planet. When you think that you have the space station on one side and the planet on the other, stop all forward movement and turn to face the station.
(diagrams)

With a bit of luck the station will look something like this, but when you've got it neatly lined up, turn the Cobra towards the planet and use maximum thrust away from the Corialis for about five seconds. Then stop, turn round to face the space station and move at about a third of maximum speed towards the station. Remember to keep the cross-hairs centred on the rectangular entrance, and to keep rotating so that the entrance is as close to horizontal as possible. Then just glide in. Easy, eh?

TRADING

The aim of the game, of course, is to achieve Elite status. But no matter how well you pilot your Cobra, there's no way you can last on a pulse laser-based armament system. You need loot to get a more powerful system.

The way to get your hands on money is by skilful trading. Starting, then strike up a simple route between Qutiri and Isinor.

The main reason for this being such an excellent route is that one planet is a Poor Agricultural while the other is a Rich Industrial, making them total opposites. To make money as fast as possible simple buy computers at a Rich planet and take them to a Poor planet.

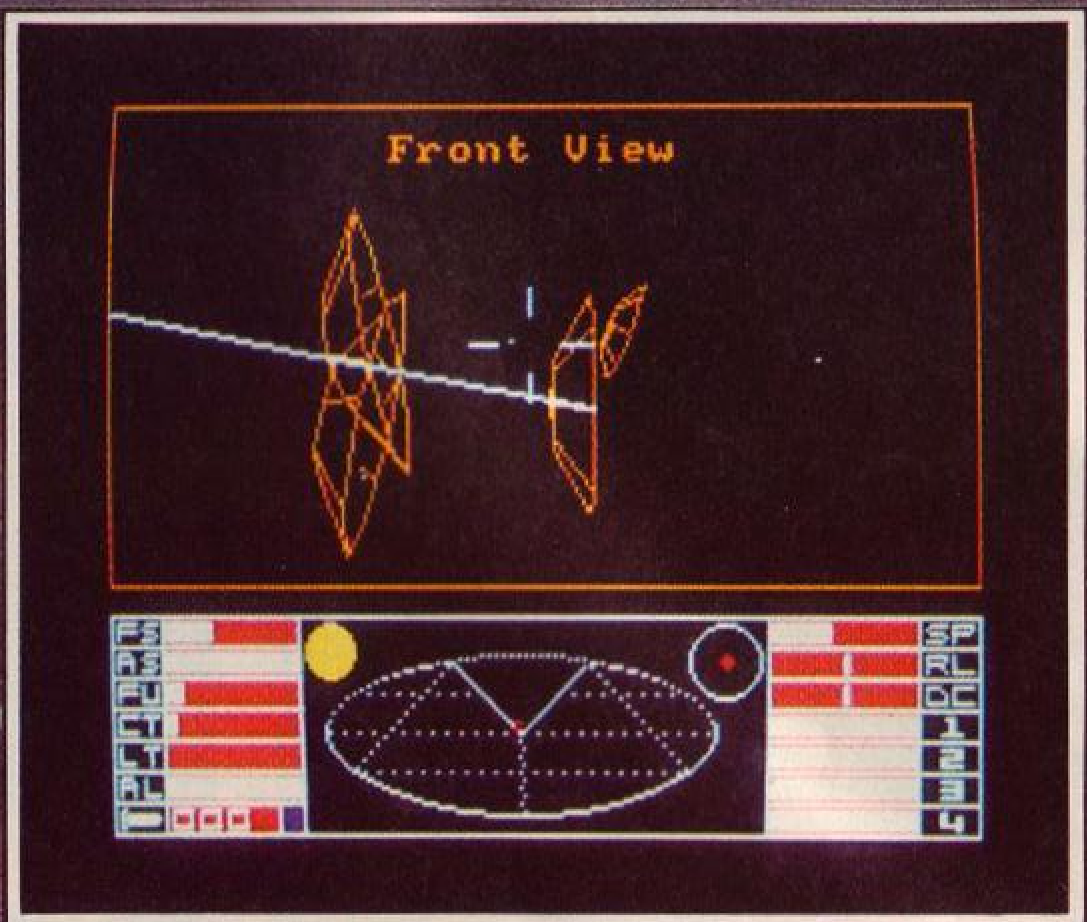
Sell them at about 80% profit and buy some Liquor/Wine to take back to the Rich planet. Sell, then buy more computers. And so on. Before long you will have a handsome profit and the opportunity to get some more equipment. But how should you spend?

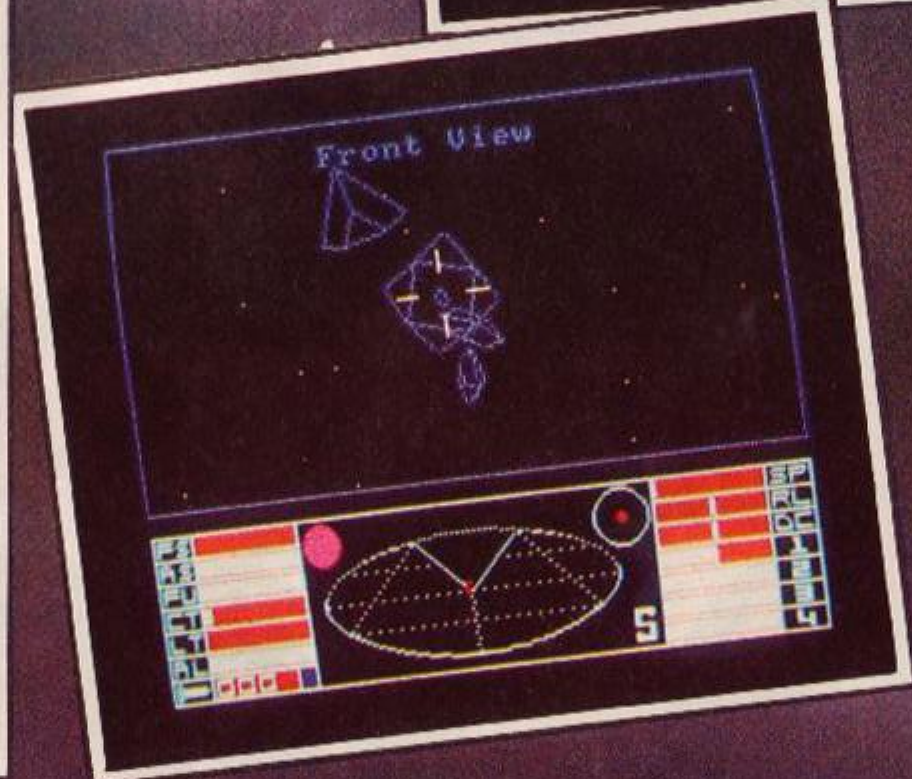
EQUIPMENT

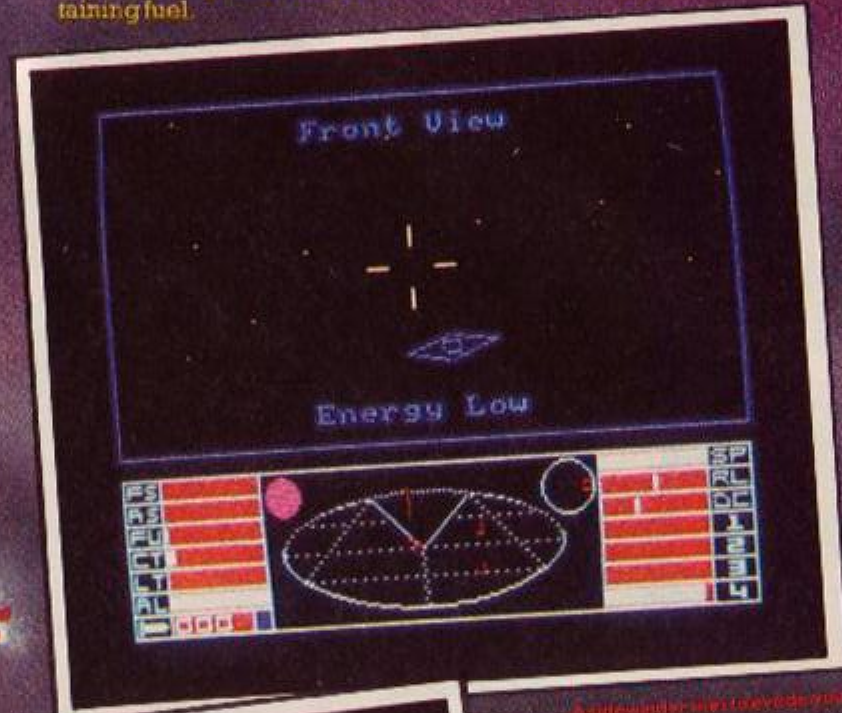
With your hard-earned cash you can buy lots of attractive extras for your Cobra Mk III. An advisable order of purchase would be ...

The most controversial piece of equipment is the Escape Capsule. It may seem useful, but if you regularly save yur character it should not really be necessary. As for the cleaning of your legal record, a pirate or bounty hunter rarely, if ever, visits a space station, using fuel scoops for obtaining fuel.

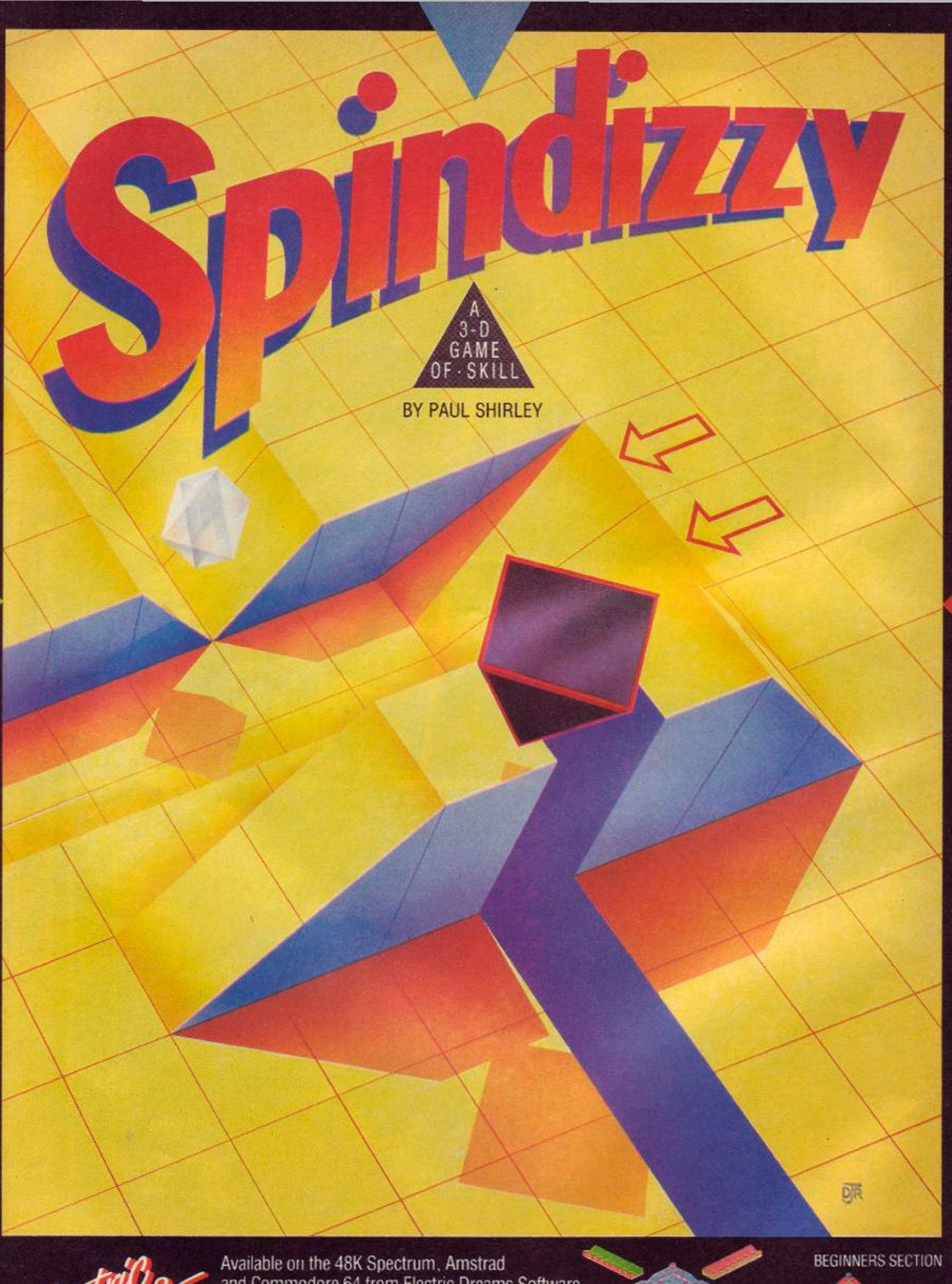
When using the ECM for zapping missiles, try to wait until one is about to hit you – if you get it as soon as it's released you miss the chance to get three at one go. Of coure, if you're *really* crazy you can shoot a space station and pick off all the vipers as they come out to atack you!

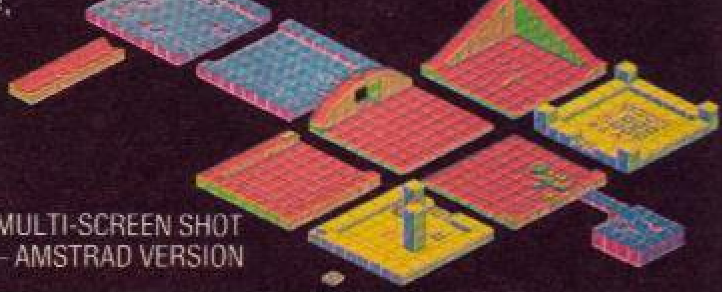






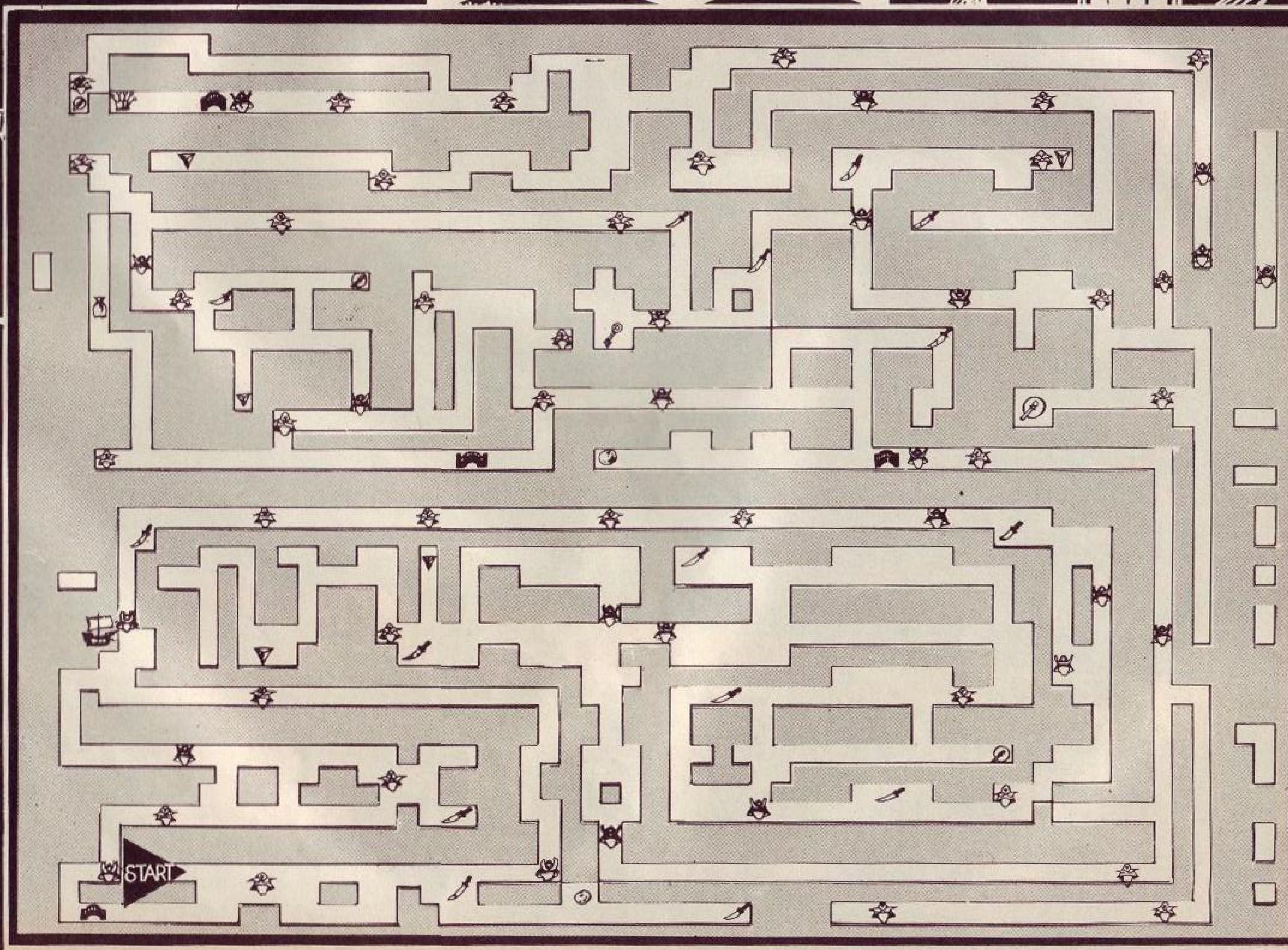
Get going on the monster game with a little help from Elite gamester Ian Boffin


Spindizzy
A 3-D GAME OF·SKILL
BY PAUL SHIRLEY


BEGINNERS SECTION
MULTI-SCREEN SHOT
– AMSTRAD VERSION

Willow Pattern

THE MAP



KEY

- WALLS — HEDGE, STONE
- EMERALD 1%
- GONG 2%
- ORANGE 3%
- VASE 4%
- KEY 5%
- SWORD
- SHIP
- SAMURAI THAT THROWS SWORDS
- SAMURAI THAT DOESN'T.
- BRIDGE
- PRINCESS

MAPPED BY GORDON. R. SCOTT.

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Codebreaker

A brain-stretching type-in of logic and luck

This month's keyboard epic is a game to get your brain working overtime. The game isn't new – you may know it as *Mastermind* or *Cows & Bulls* – but author PAUL TAYLOR has turned it into a bright, snappy program for you to pit your wits against.

The object of the game is to guess a sequence of five coloured pegs – the code – which Arnold has secretly thought up. This is no easy task, for you must guess not only the pegs that make up the code, but also the order they are in. To make matters worse, there are eight different kinds of peg, and Arnold is quite happy to use the same sort more than once in any given code. That makes over 32000 possible codes, and you only get ten guesses; this is where the brainwork comes in.

Every time you make a guess, Arnold gives it a 'score'. This consists of a series of little smiley faces which appear next to the guess, one for each correct peg. A white smiley means a peg which is of the right type but in the wrong place, while a black one indicates a peg correct in both type and position. There is no indication, however, of which pegs in your guess the smileys refer to – you have to work that out from the on-screen record of guesses and scores.

To get the coveted five black smileys of a correct guess, you'll need a lot of concentration and a fair slice of deductive logic. If the suspense gets too much for you, move the options cursor to the frowning face and press <copy>. Arnold will reveal that elusive sequence – you can then grind your teeth, as you realise where you went wrong.

How to play

On the left-hand side of the screen is a record of your guesses so far; on the right are the options available to you. Using the up and down cursor keys you can move the right-hand flashing arrow cursor to select which kind of peg to put in your next guess. You can then choose the peg's position in the guess by moving the left-hand cursor, using the left and right cursor keys. Once you're satisfied with the type and position of a peg, press <copy> to put it in place. Having selected all five pegs in this way, move the options cursor to the question mark. Now press <copy> again, to try your sequence.

Green screen blues

If you use a green screen, you'll find the colours of the different pegs hard to tell apart – to remedy this, substitute the alternative line 420 for the one already in the program. For the programmers among you, line 420 is the colour data. The first number is the code for the background colour, and the remaining eight numbers are the peg colours.

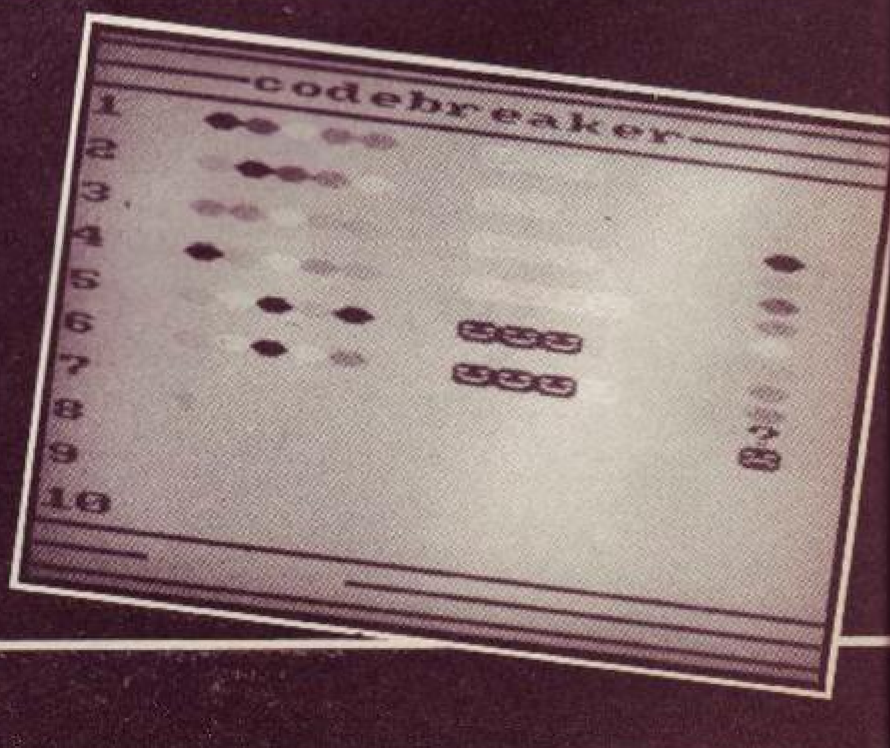
If you do decide to alter the peg colours, note that the 'correct position' smiley will be the same colour as the first peg, and the 'incorrect position' one the same as the eighth. Set them to the same colour, and you'll have a much harder game on your hands!

```
420 DATA 13,0,0,9,9,17,17,26,26
```

Typing it in

Although this isn't a terribly long listing – just over 3K – please take care over typing it in. Be specially careful with DATA statements, and make sure to copy exactly both punctuation and spacing.

It's worth saving the program every so often as a safety precaution, and certainly worth saving it before you run it. Remember that a message such as 'Overflow error in line 390' does not mean that the error is in that particular line – it could mean that you've made a mistake anywhere.



```
10 REM * CODEBREAKER *
20 REM *     by      *
30 REM *  P TAYLOR   *
40 BORDER 0:FOR n=0 TO 8:READ a:INK n,a:NEXT:INK 9,0,26:MODE
 0
50 PEN 1:LOCATE 1.1:PRINT STRING$(60,154);:LOCATE 5,2:PRINT"
codebreaker"
60 LOCATE 1,23:PRINT STRING$(60,154);:LOCATE 4.24:PRINT STRI
NG$(5,128);
70 FOR y=7 TO 14:LOCATE 18,y:PEN y-6:GOSUB 430:NEXT:PEN 1:LO
CATE 18,15:PRINT"?";:LOCATE 18,16:PRINT CHR$(225);
80 x=1:FOR y=4 TO 22 STEP 2:x$=STR$(x):LOCATE 1,y:PEN 1:PRIN
T RIGHT$(x$,LEN(x$)-1);:x=x+1:NEXT y
90 px=4:py=5:cx=19:cy=7:PEN 9:LOCATE px,py:PRINT CHR$(94);:L
OCATE cx,cy:PRINT CHR$(242);
99 REM Set new code
100 code$="":try$="xxxxx":FOR n=1 TO 5:x$=STR$(INT(RND*8)+1)
:code$=code$+RIGHT$(x$,LEN(x$)-1):NEXT
109 REM Scan keyboard
110 IF INKEY(0)>-1 THEN GOSUB 170 ELSE IF INKEY(1)>-1 THEN G
OSUB 230
120 IF INKEY(2)>-1 THEN GOSUB 190 ELSE IF INKEY(8)>-1 THEN G
OSUB 210
130 IF INKEY(9)=-1 THEN 110 ELSE IF cy=15 THEN 250 ELSE IF c
y=16 THEN 380
139 REM Place a peg
140 n$=STR$(cy-6):MID$(try$,px-3,1)=RIGHT$(n$,1):LOCATE px,p
y-1:PEN cy-6:GOSUB 430:SOUND 1,100,5
150 LOCATE px,py:PRINT CHR$(128);:px=px+1:IF px>8 THEN px=8
160 PEN 9:LOCATE px,py:PRINT CHR$(94);:FOR n=1 TO 200:NEXT:G
OTO 110
169 REM Move vertical arrow
170 LOCATE cx,cy:PRINT CHR$(128);:cy=cy-1:IF cy<7 THEN cy=16
180 PEN 9:LOCATE cx,cy:PRINT CHR$(242);:SOUND 1,300,3:FOR n=
1 TO 200:NEXT:RETURN
190 LOCATE cx,cy:PRINT CHR$(128);:cy=cy+1:IF cy>16 THEN cy=7
200 PEN 9:LOCATE cx,cy:PRINT CHR$(242);:SOUND 1,500,3:FOR n=
1 TO 200:NEXT:RETURN
209 REM Move horizontal arrow
210 LOCATE px,py:PRINT CHR$(128);:px=px-1:IF px<4 THEN px=8
220 PEN 9:LOCATE px,py:PRINT CHR$(94);:SOUND 1,400,3:FOR n=1
TO 200:NEXT:RETURN
230 LOCATE px,py:PRINT CHR$(128);:px=px+1:IF px>8 THEN px=4
240 PEN 9:LOCATE px,py:PRINT CHR$(94);:SOUND 1,600,3:FOR n=1
TO 200:NEXT:RETURN
249 REM Score a try
250 LOCATE px,py:PRINT CHR$(128);:LOCATE cx,cy:PRINT CHR$(12
8);:t$=code$:score$=""
260 FOR n=1 TO 5:IF MID$(try$,n,1)=MID$(t$,n,1) THEN score$=
score$+"b":MID$(try$,n,1)="x":MID$(t$,n,1)="x"
270 NEXT n:FOR n=1 TO 5:FOR o=1 TO 5:IF MID$(try$,n,1)="x" O
R MID$(t$,o,1)="x" THEN 290
280 IF MID$(try$,n,1)=MID$(t$,o,1) THEN score$=score$+"w":MI
D$(try$,n,1)="x":MID$(t$,o,1)="x"
290 NEXT o,n:LOCATE 11,py-1:FOR n=1 TO LEN(score$):IF MID$(s
core$,n,1)="b" THEN PEN 1:PRINT CHR$(224);:SOUND 1,150,5 ELS
E PEN 8:PRINT CHR$(224);:SOUND 1,250,5
300 NEXT n:IF score$<>"bbbbb" THEN 360 ELSE ON INT(py/4) GOT
O 310,310,320,330,340
310 m$="You must be psychic!":GOTO 350
320 m$="Excellent!":GOTO 350
330 m$="Well done.":GOTO 350
340 m$="Just made it."
350 PEN 1:LOCATE 1,2:PRINT STRING$(20,128);:LOCATE 1,2:PRINT
m$;:FOR n=600 TO 100 STEP -10:SOUND 1,n,3:NEXT:FOR n=1 TO 1
000:NEXT:GOTO 390
360 px=4:py=py+2:IF py>23 THEN FOR n=100 TO 600 STEP 10:SOUN
D 1,n,5:NEXT:LOCATE 1,2:PRINT STRING$(20,128);:PEN 1:LOCATE
1,2:PRINT"Admit defeat!";:FOR n=1 TO 1000:NEXT:GOTO 390
370 PEN 9:LOCATE px,py:PRINT CHR$(94);:cx=19:cy=7:LOCATE cx,
cy:PRINT CHR$(242);:try$="xxxxx":GOTO 110
379 REM Give up
380 LOCATE cx,cy:PRINT CHR$(128);:LOCATE px,py:PRINT CHR$(12
8);:PEN 1:LOCATE 1,2:PRINT STRING$(20,128);:LOCATE 1,2:PRINT
"Giving up?";:FOR n=700 TO 100 STEP -10:SOUND 1,n,3:FOR o=1
TO 20:NEXT o,n
390 LOCATE 4,24:FOR n=1 TO 5:cy=VAL(MID$(code$,n,1)):PEN cy:
GOSUB 430:NEXT n:cy=0
400 PEN 1:LOCATE 1,2:PRINT"Any key to try again";
410 WHILE INKEY$<>"":WEND:WHILE INKEY$="":WEND:CLS:GOTO 50
420 DATA 14,0,2,6,18,24,7,15,26
430 IF cy/2=INT(cy/2) AND y/2=INT(y/2) THEN PRINT CHR$(231);
:RETURN ELSE PRINT CHR$(233);:RETURN
```

REWARD

We're offering anything between £50 and £100 to readers who submit listings that are printed in Amstrad Action. Ideally, any programs you submit should be pretty short so that a print-out does not fill more than two pages at the most.

We're particularly interested in short utility programs that other readers will find easy to key in and useful or informative to run. But if you're a games writer, don't despair – if your program is top quality and not too long it stands a good chance of being accepted.

Submissions should be on tape or disc, accompanied by a print-out and a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Send them to: **Listings Editor, Amstrad Action, Valeside, Somerton, Somerset T11 7PS.**

We've Raved it in Action Test – now CRL are giving 25 people the chance to win a copy of *Tau Ceti*

Tau Ceti

a great space race

You're not going to do very well out there in deepest space unless you know some of the background. So we're just going to ask you a few simple questions to make sure you're worthy of winning what is an excellent game. Just pick the correct alternative for each one – e.g., if you think C is the right choice for question 1, write 1.C, and so on.

1. Who was the first man in space?
a) Alan Shepard
b) Yuri Gagarin
c) James T. Kirk

2. What is the speed of light?
a) 18,600 miles per sec.?
b) 186,000 miles per sec.?
c) 1,860,000 miles per sec.?

3. Who wrote and sang *Space Oddity*
a) Jim Bowie
b) David Bowie
c) Max Bygraves



Strike Force Harrier – take off!

Zoom into the sky with Mirrorsoft's state-of-the-art flight and combat simulator. 50 copies of the Rave can be won.

Whooooosh! In one of these things you're up in the air in no time. None of that messing about with runways. So convenient for town flying. And, of course, quite handy if you're involved in a spot of military bother.

But you've got to earn your wings in this mag. We're going to ask you some very difficult questions. If you get them right you could win the of the game. If you get them wrong, you will remain grounded until you cough up the loot to buy a copy.

1. What do the letters VTOL stand for?
2. Who was the most successful German fighter pilot of WW1?
3. How fast in m.p.h. is Mach 1?

Knight Games knockout

Your chance to win a copy of *Knight Games*, the medieval combat corker from English Software.

Ouch! It could be painful if you win this one. English Software's medieval joust-em-up features eight extremely pretty , but potentially agonising events. Can you wield a ball and chain? Is a broadsword one of your favoured weapons? Can you get to grips with a quarterstaff?

You'll have to do all these things, and more, if you want to succeed in the tough old world of chivalrous combat. And if you want to win one of the 50 copies of the game English Software are very generously putting up for grabs you'll have to answer these testing questions:

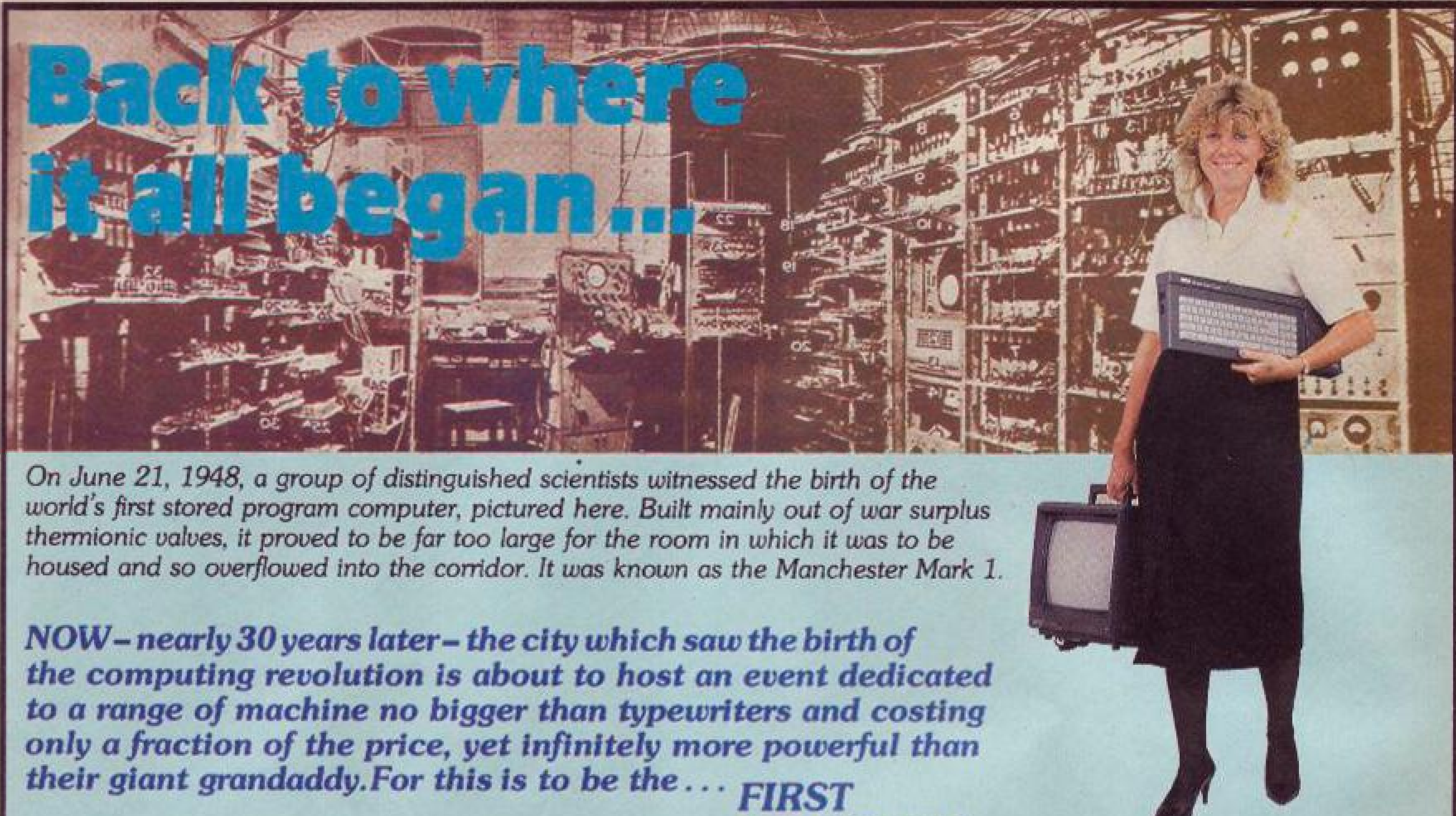
1. **Who was 'unready'?**
2. **What was the special name given to a jousting arena?**
3. **Where was Magna Carta signed?**
4. **How long did the 100 Years War last?**
5. **At which battle did King Harold get an eyeful?**

Pretty mean, eh? Better get your armoured thinking helmets on if you want to be in with a chance. Entries must be with us by April 14th.

Competition Entries

All three competitions have the same closing date – Monday April 14th. You must send a separate entry for each one on a postcard or the back of an envelope. The address to send them to is: **Amstrad Action, The Old Barn, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS**

Back to where it all began...



On June 21, 1948, a group of distinguished scientists witnessed the birth of the world's first stored program computer, pictured here. Built mainly out of war surplus thermionic valves, it proved to be far too large for the room in which it was to be housed and so overflowed into the corridor. It was known as the Manchester Mark 1.

NOW – nearly 30 years later – the city which saw the birth of the computing revolution is about to host an event dedicated to a range of machine no bigger than typewriters and costing only a fraction of the price, yet infinitely more powerful than their giant grandaddy. For this is to be the . . . FIRST NORTHERN

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The file has undergone some major surgery this month due to the confines of space but all the hottest stuff is still there. Many of you seem to have got obsessed with plugging away at really old games or spending stamina sapping hours on others so here are a few more ground rules for particular games that we would like to introduce next issue.

Boulderdash: level reached rather than score.

Bruce Lee: score for destroying the wizard once.

DT's Supertest: combined scores for days one and two played through once only.

Ghostbusters: scores for one game achieved from the $10,000 account limit.

3D Starstrike: highest score for one pass through all stages at any level.

Super Pipeline II: highest score after completing 16 screens.

Way of the Exploding Fist: highest score after defeating two opponents on tenth dan.

Yie Ar Kung Fu: highest score for defeating first eight opponents.

If there are any other requirements like this you'd like to see introduced, let us know. Don't forget to specify the basis on which your high score was achieved in each of these categories or they will be invalid.

The hitlist only has a few additions this month, most notably *Rasputin for which we expect to see some impressive percentage scores of over 1%. We would also like rods collected on Tau Ceti.* Other games where there should be plenty of action are *Who Dares Wins II, TLL, Strangeloop, Number One, Kung Fu, Cauldron, Hypersports* and of course all the games for which we've changed the qualifying rules.

A final mention about cheat modes. We get the sneaking suspicion that one or two of you aren't playing fair. Cheat modes are strictly forbidden and anyone found to be using them when producing high scores will be put in the Somerton stocks and pelted with the art department's lunch and the editorial department's socks.

Ahhh!
72,420 Lee Healy, Walsall.
38,140 Dene Graber, Bedford.
19,400 Gregory Nicholas, Hardwicke.

Airwolf
1,703 Mark Dewey, Hoddesdon.
1,172 Khin Wan Lai, Hull.
808 R Pleasants, Cardiff.

Alien Break-In
337,400 Iain McKinnon, Glasgow.
292,164 Paul Mackenzie, Lenzie.
290,680 Graeme Taylor, East Kilbride.

Amsgolf
51 shots Daniel Elkington, Solihull.
51 shots Mark Lampon, Ilford.
52 shots Brent Glover, Gravesend.

Android One
17,680 David Litherland, Bolton.

Android Two
9,720 Paul Rushton, Market Drayton.

Battle Beyond the Stars
14,000 Helge Borchsenius, Nittedal, Norway.
9,450 David Finlayson, Dundee.
9,450 Deborah Harris, Seaham.

Beach Head
124,000 Richard Ormson, Bury.
123,000 Laurance East, Cranham.
122,100 Jeremy Nargi, Hove.

Blagger
54,840 Alasdair Carnie, Dalkeith.
50,125 Paul Stagg, Rickmansworth.
49,975 Alain Salesse, Farnborough.

Boulderdash
241,387 Daragh Ward, Dublin.
118,895 Chris Surawy, Chippenham.
60,917 SR Hancock, Carlisle.

Bounty Bob Strikes Back
216,129 Ronnie Agnew, Liverpool.
54,000 Peter Day, Birmingham.
34,410 Alex Gough, Hastings.

Brian Bloodaxe
13,820 Stewart McCone, Pontefract.

Brian Jacks Superstar Challenge
4,789 George Reaves, Bradford.
4,126 Thomas Tofield, Ashford.
3,636 George Reaves, Bradford.

Bruce Lee
890,400 Jason Armstrong, Llanelli.
780,800 Jeremy Bowden, Loughborough.
409,600 Peter Day, Birmingham.

Cauldron
70,750 Ralph Turner, Newport.
36,000 A Hill, Bramhall.
22,275 Darren Ellis, Stanley.

Chiller
8,700 Ian Grainger, Wingate.
7,900 Lloyd Butler, Birmingham.
7,200 Justin Leahy, Eltham.

Chimera
5,205 GM Gatter, London.
5,077 Richard Pemberton, Charlton.
4,170 SA Collyer, Rugby.

Chuckie Egg
535,400 A Grimshaw, Blackburn.
418,070 Andy McCammont, Darlington.
395,180 David Carr, Macclesfield.

Codename Mat I
1,106 George Reaves, Bradford.
1,106 Michael Dunse, Bonnyrigg.
1,090 Eric Henry, Drogheda.

Codename Mat II
45,690 Kelvin Clarke, Telford.
27,150 Eric Henry, Drogheda.
23,960 Christopher Hardy, Weymouth.

Combat Lynx
910,300 Owen McGarvey, Glasgow.
500,000 Karsten Jensen, Aalborg, Denmark.
176,850 Alan Stenson, Catterick Garrison.

Confuzion
143,000 Duncan Ellis, Ilkley.
126,775 Jason Grandin, Penylan.
81,835 Danny Jarman, Stanstead Abbotts.

Covenant
19,120 Stewart Eves, Isleworth.
4,964 David Hodgson, Bradford.
3,040 Roy Williams, London.

Daley Thompson's Decathlon (One day)
148,760 Tim Gurney, Prestatyn.
141,710 JP Gorman, Edmonton.
139,170 I Mettler, Cookham.

Daley Thompson's Supertest (Second day)
120,833 Colin Corigan, London.
120,456 Andrew Cavender, Peterborough.
108,000 Mark Banks, Petersfield.

Dark Star
130,000 Graeme Taylor, East Kilbride.
126,520 Donald Sharkey, Scunthorpe.
123,400 Ian Boffin, Woking.

Death Wake
173,102 Jonathan West, Romford.

Defend or Die
4,340,000 Simon Sutton, Cheltenham.
2,571,925 Paul Hyett, Cheltenham.
2,033,650 Jonathan Stewart, Dundee.

Devil's Crown
543,780 Jeremy Nargi, Hove.
42,200 G Smith, Sheffield.
40,610 RM Thompson, Grangemouth.

Don't Panic
12,000 Kathryn Collin, Dunfermline.
8,150 D Collin, Dunfermline.
550 Adrian Sill, Doncaster.

Dynamite Dan
1,511 Lawrence Smith, Newport.
1,262 Lee McMahon, Manchester.

Electro Freddy
4,035 Alvin Thompson, Hebburn.
3,410 Thomas Tofield, Ashford.
2,750 Simon Dooley, Bolton.

Er*Bert
126,850 Richard Denton, Torquay.
111,000 Lawrence Smith, Newport.
76,300 Julian Cater, East Sheen.

Everyone's a Wally
3,000 A Grimshaw, Blackburn.
2,130 Paul Bennett, Rhondda.
1,700 Antony Critchley, Bracknell.

Fighting Warrior
98,800 Michael Clark, Midlothian.
87,600 Wayne Fitton, Gloucester.
76,620 Stuart Bruce, Cleator.

Fireant
39,600 Gary Brickley, Fife.
33,300 G Veazey, Peacehaven.
30,200 Mark Burford, Leamington Spa.

Gauntlet
201,500 Jonathan Shaw, Liskeard.
25,220 Andrew Matko, Glasgow.
18,610 David Schofield, Retford.

Ghouls
8,100 Simon Withers, Surrey.
7,090 Paul Stagg, Rickmansworth.
6,190 Lee Duddridge, Cadishead.

Gilligan's Gold
623,931 David Finlayson, Dundee.
598,100 Michael Clark, Midlothian.
501,750 Ian Leitch, Blandford.

3D Grand Prix
9,738 David Vincent, Hernbay.
9,292 Duncan Watt, Aldershot.
8,750 Christopher Hardy, Weymouth.

Grand Prix Rally II
72,464 Geoff Kerslake, Woodham Ferrers.
70,690 FJ Griffiths, Birkenhead.
60,320 Michael Dunse, Bonnyrigg.

Gyroscope
34,400 Simon Dennis, Ilkley.
28,610 Lee McMahon, Manchester.
21,330 Nicholas White, Plymouth.

Harrier Attack
770,450 Graham Ross, Devizes.
599,870 Mike Drury, Swinton.
517,050 Darrel Fletcher, Gosport.

Haunted Hedges
299,470 C Johnson, Sutton Coldfield.
112,870 Paul Stagg, Grantham.
33,080 Steven Playle, Braintree.

Highway Encounter
148,370 RG Messenger, Perth.
116,720 J Jefferies, Chippenham.
96,470 Nicholas Jefferies, Chippenham.

Hunchback
1,508,000 Michael Clark, Midlothian.
1,206,000 Daryl Ward, Leicester.
1,200,000 Jason Dixon, Selby.

Hunchback II
9,000 Jason Carpenter.
6,250 Steven McDougall, Aberdeen.
6,250 William Gattrell, Bangor.

Hypersports
117,595 Ralph Turner, Newport.
91,475 George Reaves, Bradford.
60,015 Martin Paterson, Glasgow.

Jet Boot Jack
258,900 David Finlayson, Dundee.
160,325 Lee Healy, Walsall.
115,375 Pete Ashe, Leicester.

Kung Fu
792 Khin Wan Lai, Hull.
698 Stuart Hutchinson, Reading.
682 Jeremy Moyers, Wantage.

Laserwarp
368,730 Denis Condren, Filey.
207,000 Michael Wilkes, Stourbridge.
198,860 T Grogan, Blackburn.

Mutant Monty
48,150 Marcus Passant, Perton.
44,950 A Wagstaffe, Whitchurch.
43,180 Alastair Kerr, Plymouth.

Nightshade
1,222,000 Julian Bunn, Newport.
943,120 Ralph Turner, Newport.
589,000 A Hill, Bramhall.

Number One
818 Nicholas White, Plymouth.
697 Tim Gurney, Prestatyn.
574 Bob Wade, Somerton.

One Man and his Droid
7,226 Ian Leitch, Blandford.
2,165 Martyn Leadbetter, Manchester.

On the Run
74,110 Daniel Singerman, Southampton.
74,060 Patrick McCorry, Belfast.
60,000 Ranjit Singh, Queen's Park.

Pinball Wizard
31,775 Roger Wilson, Blackburn.
29,550 Paul Smith, Huddersfield.
25,445 Stuart Russell, East Kilbride.

Punchy
1,132,320 Mark Salt, Irlam.
235,990 Alan Jackson, Wolverhampton.
70,130 Richard Denton, Torquay.

Raid
1,117,200 Alan Stenson, Catterick.
680,800 Bryan James
676,550 Kevin McCaughey, Bangor.

Roland on the Ropes
2,500,900 Tim Gurney, Prestatyn.
2,000,750 Adrian Johnston, Shrewsbury.
1,450,700 Harvey Case, Orpington.

Sabre Wulf
391,020 Paul Simpson, London.
237,050 Simon Whitehouse, Storrington.
142,375 Jason Armstrong, Llanelli.

Sir Lancelot
82,240 Simon Davies, Filey.
56,830 GJM McGouran, Birmingham.
12,120 Andrew Preston, Stockport.

Skyfox
38,500 Richard Craven, Ilkley.
37,500 Mark Thould, Canterbury.
37,500 Gerry Hughes, Cranleigh.

Sorcery
Lots of people over 97,000

Sorcery Plus
153,450 Joanne Sturton, Orpington.
137,806 Simon Keen, Camberley.
137,634 Derek Henderson, Clarkston.

Starion
38,305 Shafqat Rasul, Alloa.
32,911 Sean Brady, Eltham.
32,416 Robert Barclay, Desborough.

3D Starstrike
20,072,000 Tim Gurney, Prestatyn.
10,031,000 Joseph Farrington, Warrington.
7,600,000 Colin Hardie, Tranent.

Strangeloop
10.065 Patrick Hanna, Birchington.
9,629 Liam Mcmaster, Whitehaven.
7,783 Alexander Kirk, Northwood.

Super Pipeline II
2,338,340 Joseph Dittman, Wigan.
1,228,055 Graham Ross, Devizes.
426,460 Matthew Burbedge, Sittingbourne.

Mini Challenges

Score challenged: 150,650 on *Beach-Head* by Jonathan Stewart.
Challenger and reason: Anonymous. The maximum score is between 120,000 and 125,000 depending on how many reconnaisance planes are sent.

Score challenged: 500,200,000 on *Gilligan's Gold* by Ian Leitch.
Challenger and reason: Ian Leitch. I wrote down my score wrongly – it was in fact 500,200.

Score challenged: 115,573 on *Hypersports* by Paul Edwards.
Challenger and reason: Mark Lampon. You can't get a three at the end of a score.

Score challenged: 235.79 1/2 AEL0G on *Roland goes Caterwauling* (2nd Edition.
Challenger and reason: Karsten Jensen from Denmark. To get more than 200 AEL0G demands that you must use 3 blazoons on screen 2311, which is impossible.

Tankbusters
18,300 Ian Boffin, Woking.
890 Darren Ellis, Stanley.
450 RG Messenger, Perth.

TLL
54,440 PM Davidson, Norwich.
23,170 Martin Middlemiss, Otley.
22,170 Duncan Ellis, Ilkley.

The Way of the Exploding Fist
2,393,800 Tim Gurney, Prestatyn.
2,242,800 Jason Armstrong, Llanelli.
2,193,000 Matthew Lerrigo, London.

Who Dares Wins II
110,480 Lawrence Smith, Newport.
99,450 Ralph Turner, Newport.
98,750 Jonathan Stewart, Dundee.

Wizard's Lair
168,385 Adrian Leigh, Stockport.
152,000 Paul Lewis Northwich.
142,250 Wyndham Rennie, Radstock.

Yie Ar Kung-Fu
13,728,780 M Valery
10,110,920 Paul Ingleton, Wembley.
10,109,520 JP Gorman, Edmonton.

Zorro
210,250 Colin Winter, Grantham.
44,600 Lee McMahon, Manchester.
41,000 Simon O'Connell, Sidcup.

STUNNING SOFTWARE $AVINGS!

Wake up to Amstrad Action's unique mail order service

Watch out for yoyr fingers, these pages are HOT! They give you a way of getting hold of sizzling software at sizzling discounts. Simply by using the vouchers printed below, you can obtain discounts ranging from 50p to a full £5 on the programs you want. It makes it easy to recoup the complete cost of this magazine at a stroke!

In addition to these discounts, almost all orders qualify for a special, no-strings-attached FREE GIFT ranging from blank cassettes to full-priced games.

We know of no more exciting way of getting the programs you need.

▶ Reliable

▶ Economic

▶ Fast

FREE!

with any order over £5

A C15 data cassette. These cassettes contain high-quality tape especially designed for use by computer owners. They come in library case with blank inlay card.

with any order over £15

Your pick of any one of the games featured in the SOFTWARE SUPER-SALE box! They're worth from £8-10 each! (Please note, you should specify a second choice on the order form in case your first choice is out of stock.)

with any order over £30

Your pick of any TWO of the games featured in the SOFTWARE SUPER-SALE box! It means you can pick up games whose shop price is worth more than half your total order! (Please note, you should specify second choices on the order form in case your first choices are out of stock.)

50p VOUCHER
For use with orders from £5.00-£9.99
(max. one voucher per order)

£1 VOUCHER
For use with orders from £10.00-£19.99
(max. one voucher per order)

£2 VOUCHER
For use with orders from £20.00-£49.99
(max. one voucher per order)

£5 VOUCHER
For use with orders over £50.00
(max. one voucher per order)

The rave way of buying raves

If you're not sure quite what games you'd like you could do worse than make a selection from this list – it's made up of programs given an AA Rave review in this or previous issues of Amstrad Action. Remember that by sending in vouchers you can obtain considerable savings on the listed prices.



YIE AR KUNG FU
Hilarious combat action. £8.95 cass

BOUNTY BOB STRIKES BACK
Oh-so-addictive platforming. £9.95 cass, £13.95 disk.

SPY VS SPY
Wacky cartoon capers. £9.95 cass.

BATTLE OF BRITAIN
Classy wargame. £9.95 cass.

3D GRAND PRIX
Tire-burning graphics! £9.95 cass £13.95 disk.

BRUCE LEE
Leaping and fighting. £9.95 cass, £13.95 disk

RAID
Bombing the Commies. £9.95 cass, £13.95 disk

MATCHDAY
Skilful soccer play. £8.95 cass

NIGHTSHADE
Dazzling graphics from Ultimate. £9.95 cass

SWEEVO'S WORLD
Humourous, stylish, brain-teasing. £7.95 cass

TLL
Unbelievable scrolling. £8.95 cass

BARRY McGUIGAN'S BOXING
Best Amstrad boxing game. £9.95 cass

BOULDER DASH
You can't stop playing. £9.95 cass

LORDS OF MIDNIGHT
Great adventure epic. £8.95 cass £12.95 disk

CYRUS 2 CHESS
Looks superb, plays tough. £9.95 cass £13.95 disk

WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST
Smash-hit combat. £9.95 cass

WHO DARES WINS II
Great Commando-style shoot-em-up. £8.95 cass

SPELLBOUND
Bargain arcade-adventure. £2.99 cass

TANK COMMAND
Tough battle-field action. £13.95 disk

SKYFOX
3D air combat simulator. £9.95 cass

DALEY THOMPSON's SUPERTEST
Eight more gruelling events. £8.95 cass

IMPORTANT

► If you want the disk version of a game you must mark this clearly on the order form. Otherwise you'll get a cassette. Do check first that a disk version exists and that you have the right price for it.

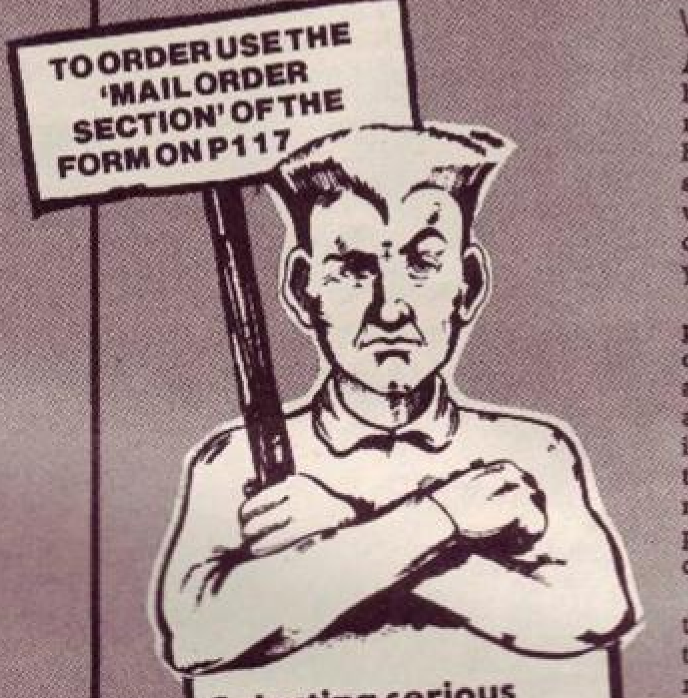
► We try to be as accurate as we can in giving details on price and disk-version availability. However we can't be held liable for any errors which may have crept in.

HOW ORDERS ARE DEALT WITH

Amstrad Action Mail Order is run here in Somerton, but in a separate location from the main AA HQ. The operation is run by the super-efficient SUE TAYLOR, the woman who gets more mail in a day than most people get each year!

Unless your order includes programs which our suppliers cannot get hold of for some reason, Sue will despatch all packages within three days of receiving them. Therefore, allowing for the time in the post, you can normally expect to receive your parcel within a week to 10 days of ordering.

If it's delayed beyond that, the chances are you've ordered a title which either hasn't yet been released or is temporarily unavailable. In which case a phone call from you WON'T speed things up. (In fact, the reverse. Phone-calls are very time-consuming to deal with.) Naturally, if a long delay was likely we'd let you know.



Selecting serious software

If games aren't your scene, how about choosing one of these excellent programs (or any other serious software...)?

TASWORD 6128
Superb word-processor for 6128 owners making full use of the extra memory. £24.95 disk.

TASWORD 464/464D
The earlier versions for 464 or 664 owners. The disk program includes a mail-merge facility. £19.95 cass, £24.95 disk.

IDISCOVERY
Probably the best of the tape-to-disk copiers. £7.99 cass, £11.99 disk.

SUPERCALC 2
The amazing CP/M spreadsheet which sells for hundreds of pounds on other micros. £49.95 disk.

MASTERFILE
A good value database. £24.95 cass, £29.95 disk

MASTERCALC
Campbell Systems' powerful spreadsheet. Only £24.95 cass, £29.95 disk

Overseas readers can join in!

Readers in the Republic of IRELAND can order any of these goods at the same rates as British readers provided that payment is made in pounds Sterling. If you wish to pay in Irish punts you must add a IR£3.50 surcharge IN ADDITION to allowing for the current exchange rate – that's what it costs us to pay in your cheques or postal orders.

Readers elsewhere in EUROPE must add 25% to the cost of their order to allow for extra postage rates. Payment must be in pounds Sterling.

If you live OUTSIDE EUROPE please add 50% to the cost of your order to cover postage. Please also specify whether you require air-mail or surface delivery. We will pay refunds in cases where the postage turns out substantially cheaper than the extra money you have paid. Once again, payment must be in pounds Sterling.

SOFTWARE SUPER-SALE

These games only £2.95 each!

Hey, how about this? Sixteen Amstrad game-titles which you can buy at about ONE THIRD of the shop price! They may not be AA raves, but all but a couple are perfectly good pieces of software. Most received AA ratings of 60-70%, but that was based on their full asking price of £8-10. At just £2.95 each they're great bargains.

You can order them in the normal way by filling in the Mail Order Section of our All-in-One Action Form. And remember, if your order is large enough you can claim further discounts and maybe even extra games FREE!

AMERICAN FOOTBALL (Argus/Amsoft)
Good simulation needing accurate tactical thinking. AA Rating 70%

AMSGOLF (Computersmith/Amsoft)
How low can you get your handicap? AA Rating 67%.

CHUCKIE EGG (A'n'F)
Hugely addictive, high-scoring platform game. AA Rating 78%

CLASSIC ADVENTURE (Amsoft)
The great adventure that started it all. Pre-Pilgrim.

CODENAME MAT (Amsoft/Micromega)
Demanding 3D space shoot-em-up. AA Rating 71%

ELECTRO FREDDY (Amsoft/Softspot)
Frantic, humourous, one-screen action. AA Rating 57%

HUNTER KILLER (Amsoft/Protek)
Submarine warfare simulation. AA Rating 47%

JET BOOT JACK (Amsoft/English Software)
Challenging platform game with slick graphics. AA Rating 70%

LASER WARP (Amsoft/MikroGen)
Smooth, colourful, classic shoot-em-up. AA Rating 84%.

MANIC MINER (Amsoft/Software Projects)
The classic wacky platform game. AA Rating 84%

MASTER CHESS (Amsoft/MikroGen)
Worthy multi-level chess game. AA Rating 60%

MESSAGE FROM ANDROMEDA
Offering for Adventure fans. Pre-pilgrim.

ROLAND GOES DIGGING (Amsoft/Gem)
Frenetic version of 'Space Panic'. AA Rating 84%

SPACE HAWKS (Amsoft/Durell)
Version of the shoot-em-up classic 'Galaxians'. AA Rating 49%

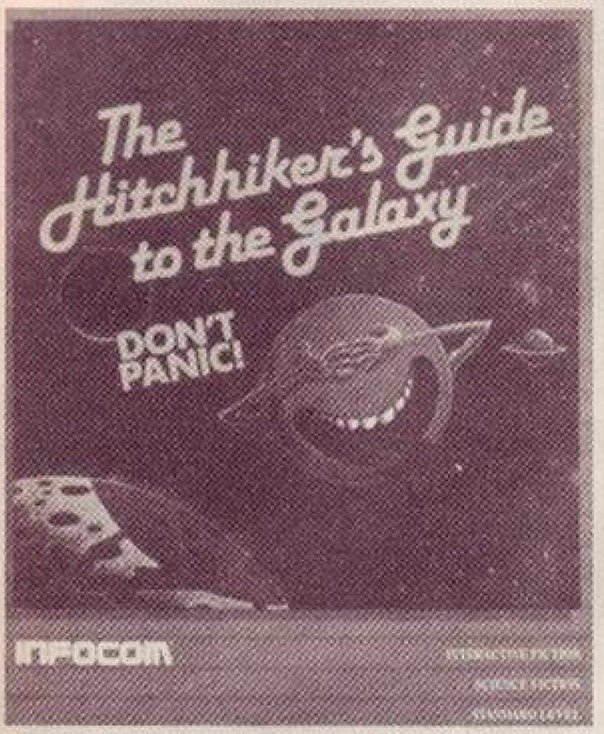
SPLAT! (Amsoft/Incentive)
Fast-moving, original arcade game. AA Rating 63%

SUPER-PIPELINE II (Amsoft/Taskset)
Nice graphics, nice music, zany action. AA Rating 71%

INFOCOM ADVENTURES

Save £6+!!

Hitch-hikers' Guide only £19.95 (disk)!
Other adventures only £16.95 (disk)!
CPC 464/664/6128 / PCW 8256 compatible



No one who's played an Infocom adventure is likely to dispute that they are among the most sophisticated computer entertainments money can buy.

There are no graphics, no animation, no colours. But the text you are given on screen and the programs' astonishing ability to understand and respond to your typed instructions are enough to have you glued to the keyboard for weeks.

'Hitch-hikers' Guide to the Galaxy' based on the Douglas Adams book/radio show/TV series is the most recent Infocom title and has made adventurers around the world speechless with its mix of brilliant humour and brain-twisting puzzles.

But the other titles in the range – Zork 1, Deadline, Seastalker and Planetfall – are also superb.

We've pulled out all the stops on these games to offer you them at absolutely the biggest discount we can afford. The retail price of 'Hitch-hikers' has been widely quoted as £24.95, but this in fact is the price EXCLUDING VAT. With VAT it works out at £28.69, so our offer of £19.95 (which INCLUDES VAT, post and packing) is almost £9 off!

Similarly the recommended price of the rest of the range is £22.95 each (£19.95 + VAT) so you can save £6 by buying it from us.

S * SPECIAL OFFERS * SPECI

THE MUSIC SYSTE

Only £12.95 cass, £16.95 disk!
464/664/6128 compatible

This program from Rainbird Software is very special indeed – by far the most sophisticated music composing system available on the Amstrad. It allows you to create and play a wide range of synthesized sounds, turning your Amstrad into a powerful musical keyboard.

It's already a bargain at its shop price of £15.95 on cassette, £19.95 on disk. However, as you can see, you can buy it direct from us for even less. It's a great offer for anyone interested in music.

ALIEN 8

Save £5!

Only £4.95 cass!
464/664/6128 compatible



Here's a chance to pick up one of the great games of 1985 at a super low price. Ultimate's Alien 8 features stunning 3D graphics together with mind-boggling puzzles. When reviewed in our September issue it received an overall rating of 96%! The task is to explore a vast space ship and work out how to activate 132 'cryonaughts' on board. Frankly, if you haven't played this game, you don't yet know what your Amstrad is capable of.



BIG LEAGUE SOCCER

Save £2!

Only £5.95 cass
464/664/6128 compatible

This game won an AA Rave review which described it as 'better than Football Manager'. It puts you in the role of a league manager with all the financial and personnel decisions that involves. Experience the agony of sweating over your team selection and then watching your players outmanoevred on the pitch during the graphic highlights of each match! Or maybe you can cheer up our publisher by guiding Southampton to the top of the first Division...

I'm over the moon about this one, Brian.



Save £3!

GRAPHIC ADVENTURE CREATOR

Only £19.95 cass, £24.95 disk!
464/664/6128 compatible

Anyone interested in adventures has *got to* be interested in this remarkable program from Incentive Software which won such an enthusiastic review from The Pilgrim in January's Amstrad Action. The Graphic Adventure Creator allows you to create your own text and graphic adventures of considerable sophistication and has generally been rated the best such product on the market.

Go for it, Frodo.



AL OFFERS * SP

To order, please use the Special Offer section of the all-in-one form on p**118**

(Please note, these offers are separate from the rest of our mail order scheme. You cannot use vouchers to obtain further discounts, and you cannot claim the free gifts – we've already knocked off the most we can!)

ALEX HIGGINS WORLD POOL + ALEX HIGGINS WORLD SNOOKER

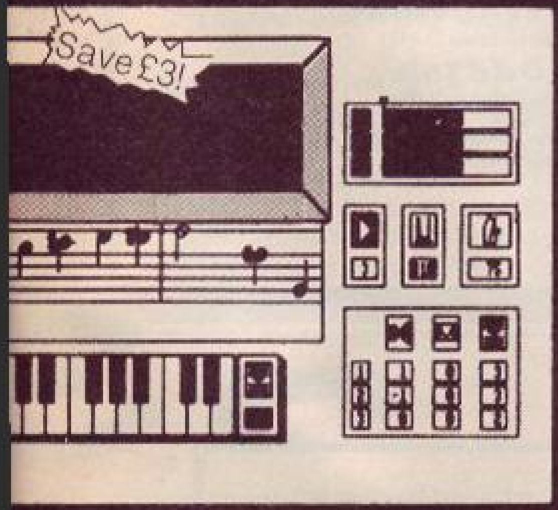
Only £7.90 two cassettes!
464/664/6128 compatible

Save £10!

Here's your cue to snooker your bank manager and pocket two Amsoft programs for less than the price of one. Much cheaper and easier to accommodate than a snooker table! Allows you and a friend to play snooker on TV anytime you like.



Save £3!



Save £3!

ELITE

Only £11.95 cass, £16.95 disk!
464/664/6128 compatible

If you've been wowed by our review of Firebird's amazing space epic Elite, but can't quite manage the normal asking price, here's an offer to blast you into hyperspace – a full £3 off the normal price of both the cassette and disk versions (yes, the shop price for the disk version is £19.95, not £17.95 as we printed two months ago).

If you've missed out on all the excitement about the game, just take it from us that Elite is one of THE greatest computer games of all time. In fact, it can become a way of life.

(Please note that at time of writing the disk version is still unavailable because of a shortage of 3" disks, while the cassette version has been temporarily withdrawn because of a bug. Both these problems are expected to be resolved by the time this magazine is on sale.)

Save £4!

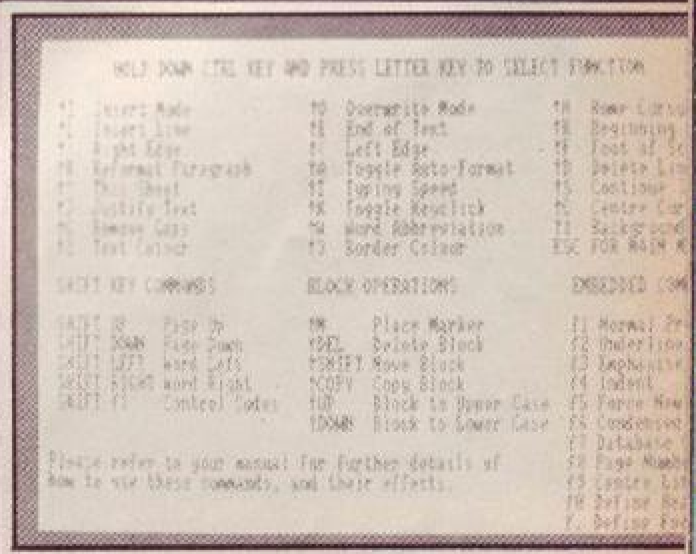
MINI OFFICE 2

Only £11.95 cass, £16.95 disk!
464/664/6128 compatible

Strange as it may seem for us to pour praise on a title produced by one of our competitors, it is nonetheless true: Mini Office 2 (created by Database, publishers of 'Computing with the Amstrad') offers astonishing value for money – SIX interlinked programs which can transform your computer into a machine of immense power.

The programs are: Word Processor, Database, Spreadsheet, Graphics, Communications, and Label Printer. All are remarkably full-featured for a package of this cost – so this is not just a superb introduction to someone unfamiliar with serious software, it has the power to be put to genuine use.

Considering you could pay £20 for any one of the six programs, the 'Mini Office 2' shop price of £14.95 cass, £19.95 disk is something of a bargain. You can draw your own conclusions about the value of this offer...



Amstrad Action Readers' Charts

A big thanks for sending in all your votes – keep them coming.
Having rocketed in at number 3 last month, *Elite* has now forced *Yie Ar Kung Fu* out of the top spot, pushing it down two places. *Sweevo's World* enters one place below at number 4. Could it follow *Elite* by becoming next month's number 1? Watch this space and all will be revealed.
Both the *Sorceries* are still flying high near the top of the charts, but a new one to watch out for is *Skyfox*, which has climbed in at number 12.
It's been a fairly quiet month though for the serious software, with very little movement within the Top 10. But *Graphic Adventure Creator* has moved up to number 1, pushing all last month's top 3 down one place. All that seems to have happened towards the bottom end of the chart is a reshuffling of the trusty old favourites.

SERIOUS SOFTWARE TOP 10

1. Graphic Adventure Creator
Incentive (19.9%)
2. Mini Office
Database (14.2%)
3. AMX Mouse
AMS (8.6%)
4. Discovery
Siren (6.5%)
5. Electric Studio Light Pen
Electric Studio (5.7%)
6. Tasword
Tasman (5.6%)
7. Easi-Amsword
Amsoft (4.9%)
8. Transmat
Pride Utilities (3.9%)
9. Odd Job
Pride Utilities (3.9%)
10. The Quill
Gilsoft (2.4%)

The Voting System

For anyone new to our state-of-the-art voting forms and system – or anyone STILL having trouble – here's another run down on what to so and how to do it.

You have at your disposal a TOTAL of 10 votes for each chart. These can be split up any way you like on up to five titles, but the number of votes you give to the different titles must add up to 10.

For example, on the games chart you could give all 10 votes to a single game. Or you could 5 votes to one game, 2 to another, and 1 each to three others. You just have to allocate your 10 votes to reflect your preferences as accurately as possible. What you CAN'T do is give five different games 7 or 8 votes each. That's greedy.

One further thing you certainly can't do is send in photocopies of the form. There have been attempts at jiggery-pokery in the past, so we want to avoid any possibility of it happening again.

GAMES TOP 20

1. Elite
Firebird (11.1%)
2. Sorcery Plus
Virgin/Amsoft (9.1%)
3. Yie Ar Kung Fu
Imagine (8.6%)
4. Sweevo's World
Gargoyle Games (5.2%)
5. Sorcery
Virgin/Amsoft (5.1%)
6. 3D Grand Prix
Amsoft (4.4%)
7. Way of the Exploding Fist
Melbourne House (4.2%)
8. Hypersports
Imagine (3.8%)
9. Highway Encounter
Vortex (3.0%)
10. TLL
Vortex (2.7%)
11. Nonterraqueous
Mastertronic (2.6%)
12. Skyfox
Ariolasoft (2.4)
13. Soul of a Robot
Mastertronic (2.1%)
14. Combat Lynx
Durrell (2.1%)
15. Cauldron
Palace Software (1.6%)
16. Starion
Melbourne House (1.5%)
17. Spellbound
Mastertronic (1.4%)
18. Who Dares Wins II
Alligata (1.4%)
19. Lords of Midnight
Amsoft/Beyond (1.3%)
20. Marsport
Gargoyle (1.3%)

THE ALL-IN-ONE ACTION FORM

IMPORTANT
Don't forget to fill in this bit!

Name ____________________

Age ____________________

Address ____________________

____

Telephone number ____________________

Fill in as much of the form as you wish (front and back). Then cut out the ENTIRE PAGE (even if you've only filled in parts of it) and post it to:
AA Forms, 18 Pinewood Drive
Somerton, Somerset, TA11 6JP

Mail Order Section

I would like the following titles:

Game	Software house	Retail price
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

Total cost pre-discount,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,

Please circle ONE of the following A-H if it applies:

A: The total cost is under £5.

B: The total cost is between £5 and £10, and I enclose a 50p discount voucher.

C: The total cost is between £10 and £15, and I enclose a £1 discount voucher.

D: The total cost is between £15 and £20. I enclose a £1 discount voucher and claim ONE free game.

E: The total cost is between £20 and £30. I enclose a £2 discount voucher and claim ONE free game.

F: The total cost is between £30 and £50. I enclose a £2 discount voucher and claim TWO free games.

G: The total cost is over £50. I enclose a £5 discount voucher and claim TWO free games.

H: I enclose 1/2/3/4 vouchers from earlier issues of AA, entitling me to a 5%/10%/15%/20% discount.

After allowing for discount the total amount payable is,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,

I enclose a cheque/postal order for this amount made out to Future Publishing.

If you are claiming a free game or games please CIRCLE your first choice(s) and place a TICK by any of the other titles you will accept if your first choice(s) are out of stock:
American Football / Amsgolf / Chuckie Egg / Classic Adventure / Code Name Matt / Electro Freddy / Hunter Killer / Hunchback / Jet Boot Jack / Laser Warp / MasterChess / Manic Miner / Message from Andromeda / Roland Goes Digging / Space Hawks / Splat! / Super Pipeline II

Game chart voting form

I would like to vote for the following game(s):

GAME	SOFTWARE HOUSE	NO. OF VOTES
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
		Total number of votes = 10

Serious software voting form

I would like to vote for the following piece(s) of 'serious software':

PROGRAM	SOFTWARE HOUSE	NO. OF VOTES
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
		Total number of votes = 10

THE ALL-IN-ONE ACTION

Special Offer Section

FORM

Fill in name and address overleaf!

I would like to take advantage of the following special offer(s) and have placed a tick in the relevant box(es).

1. ELITE
☐ cass £11.95 ☐ disk £16.95

2. THE MUSIC SYSTEM
☐ cass £12.95 ☐ disk £16.95

3. MINI OFFICE 2
☐ cass £11.95 ☐ disk £16.95

4. COMPLETE MODEM PACKAGE with Prism 2000
£89.95
☐ 464 version ☐ 664/6128 version

5. INFOCOM ADVENTURES
My machine is (please circle): CPC 464/664/6128 / PCW 8256
☐ Hitch-hiker's Guide to the Galaxy £19.95
☐ Zork 1 £16.95 ☐ Seastalker £16.95
☐ Deadline £16.95 ☐ Planetfall £16.95

6. GRAPHIC ADVENTURE CREATOR
☐ cass £19.95 ☐ disk £23.95

7. BIG LEAGUE SOCCER
☐ cass £4.95

8. ALIEN 8
☐ cass £4.95

9. ALEX HIGGINS WORLD POOL/SNOOKER
☐ cass(2) £7.90

I enclose a cheque/postal order for the total amount payable made out to Future Publishing. (Please note, you are not entitled to claim further discounts or free gifts on this amount. They apply only to the Mail Order section.)

Name ....
Address ....
....

....
....
(For administrative reasons you should fill in the above details here as well as on the reverse of the form).

High-score entry

I would like to register my high-scores in the following Amstrad games:

	GAME	SCORE	TIME TAKEN	LEVEL
1.				
2.				
3.				

I promise these are genuine scores achieved without using cheat methods.
Signed

High-score challenge

I hereby challenge the following high scores printed in Amstrad Action:

	GAME	SCORE
1.		
2.		

I think the score(s) impossible because:

AA sensational subscription offer department presents... FRE

MASTERGAM

Continuing the tradition of astounding Amstrad Action subscription offers comes this virtually IRRESISTIBLE proposal. Subscribe to AA for as little as £8.25 and receive a stunning Mastergame of your choice absolutely free! Take up the offer and not only do you guarantee yourself a regular monthly supply of the world's most satisfying and modest Amstrad magazine, you also pick up one of the games which between them represent the cream of Amstrad leisure software over the last six months.

Each one of the titles on this page has received the much-coveted Mastergame award in a past issue of Amstrad Action. Each one is an outstanding piece of software which should provide you hours of entertainment. And all you need to do to get hold of one is take outeither a six-month or a 12-month subscription to AA.

You can even have TWO of the games that come free with a six-month subscription by doubling up and taking out a 12-month subscription here and now.

Although this offer applies only to the CASSETTE versions of these programs, disk owners too can cash in with one of the Amsoft range of disk games – see separate panel for details.

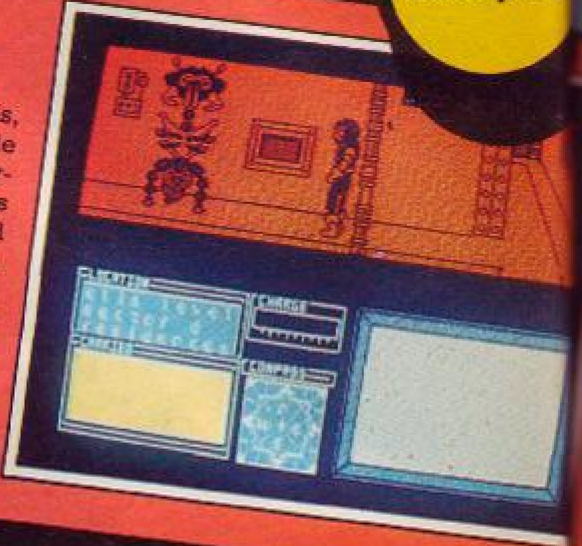
Phew! It's a scorcher.

Blurb A

FREE with a 6-month subscription!

MARSPORT (normally £9.95)

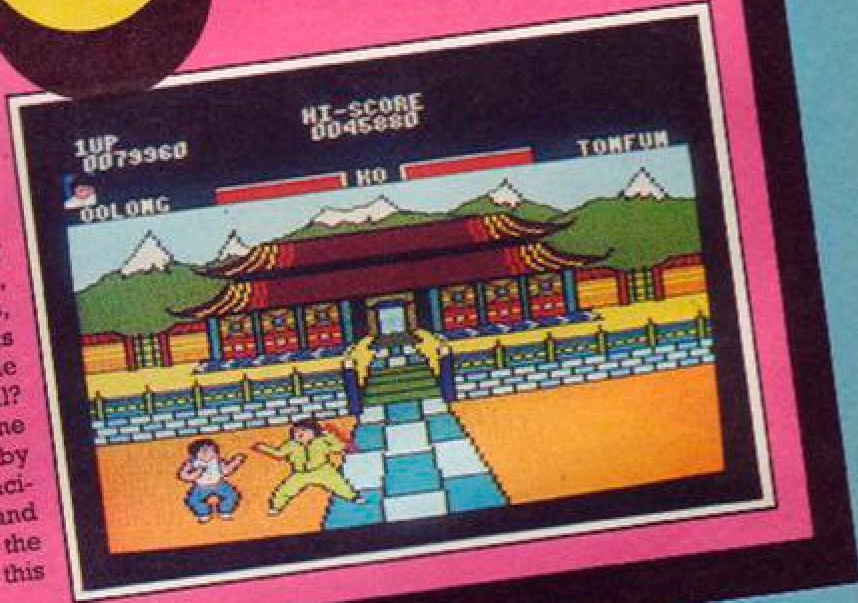
A vast arcade-adventure, this, from masters of the art Gargoyle Games. You control a superbly-animated spaceman working his way around the many levels and rooms of a giant space-station. You encounter flesh-creeping, evil creatures and must solve many devious puzzles. The game is the first in Gargoyle's Seige of Earth trilogy. Get it, and you'll hardly be able to wait for parts two and three.



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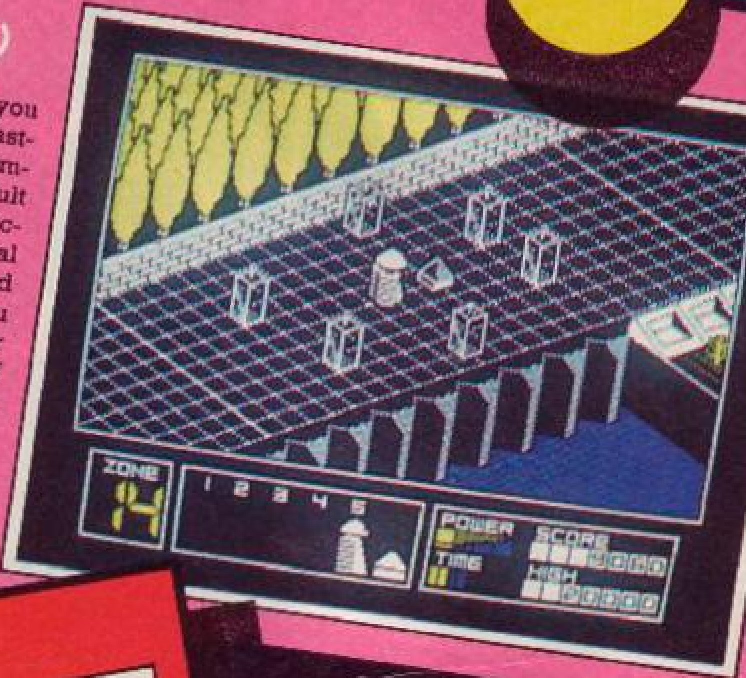
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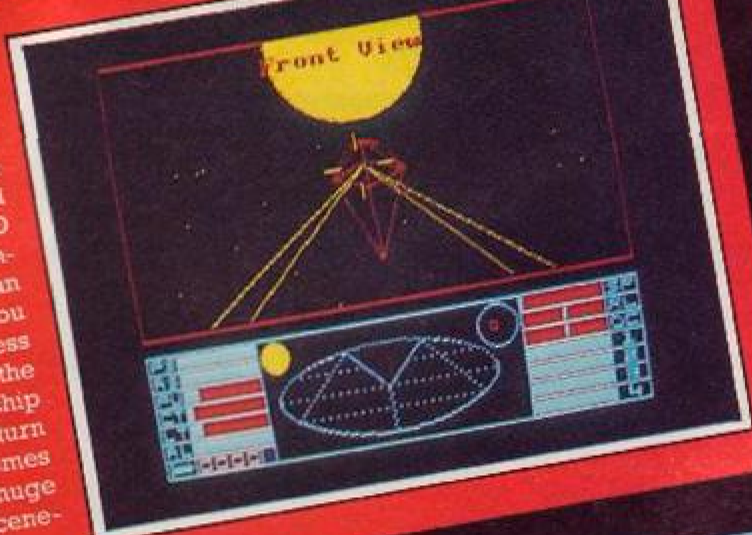
The trouble with this game is you can't stop playing it. Superb, fast-moving, solid 3D graphics, combined with a devilishly difficult task make it irresistibly addictive. The idea is to guide a special bomb along a highway littered with hazards and aliens. You shoot the aliens and move or avoid the hazards. The genius of it is that the task can only be completed by working how and where to shunt various objects blocking your path. You can turn them to your advantage! Vortex produced a winner.



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STRANGELOOP PLUS

From the same programmers as Sorcery Plus, this disk version again goes beyond the superb cassette-based original which by itself won a rave review in AA. A demanding arcade-adventure set in a robot factory.

3D GRAND PRIX

The best motor racing game on the Amstrad micros. You have a detailed driver's eye view including rear view mirrors to reveal the cars coming up behind. Fast, exciting action.

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The controversial game from US Gold which has you pitted against the entire Soviet nuclear attack force. Four different stages of classy, shoot-em-up action.

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MEGA-GIFT!!

We're at it again! Yes, next month Amstrad Action will proudly sport on it's cover a FREE TAPE, containing a terrific COMPLETE GAME as well as PLAYABALE DEMOS of some of the hottest new software coming your way. What are they? Well, that would be telling. But, believe me, this stuff is SUPERB. It's bound to be a sell-out in the shops, so order your copy NOW to avoid disappointment.

▶ *Rasputin* mapped

Essential to anyone trying to crack this months's mean Master-game. We'll show where everything is, in glorious AmstradActionColor.

▶ Serious Software

We'll be looking at the latest releases on Gremlin's utility label, Discovery. *Laser Compiler* from Ocean will be put through its paces. *Scratchpad Plus*, Caxton's souped-up spreadsheet for the 6128 and 8256, has its cells examined.

▶ Start to program

This is the first in a series of articles that will give the absolute beginner the chance to work his way up thrpough the ranks of comoputer geniuses. We'll be starting from basics and progress in clearly explained steps up to the heights of machine code.

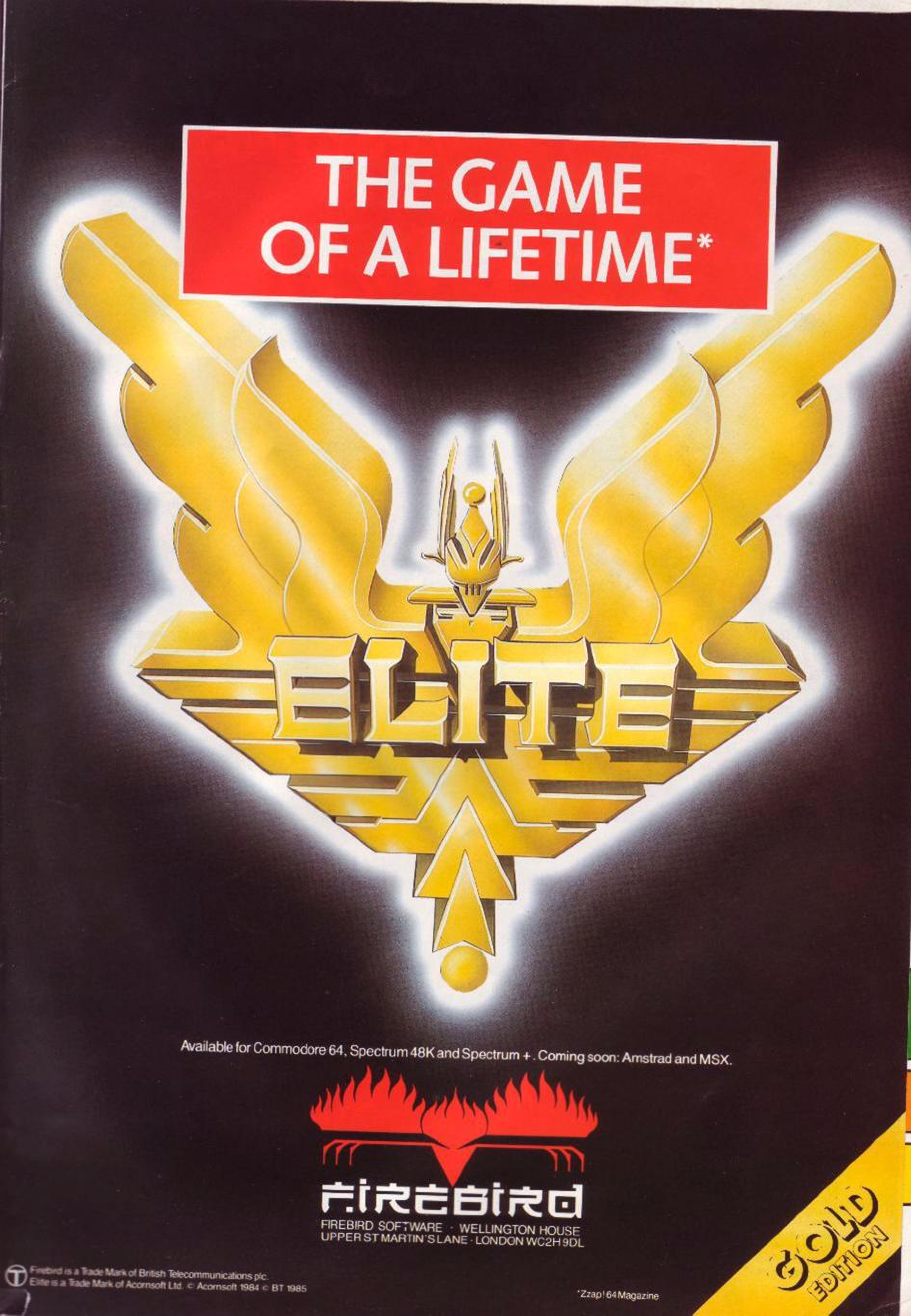
PLUS

▶ ACTION TEST – a whole stack of hot games – *Saboteur, Turbo Esprit, Winter Games, Movie* – is coming next month. They'll get the usual work-out.
▶ HOT STUFF – more stunning special offers.
▶ ADVENTURES – The Pilg searches for fun in the mysterious world of text-entry.

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